

# *Bible* Lessons



"He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?"

Luke 16:10-11

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*Quarterly Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People*

## THEME FOR BIBLE LESSONS 1ST QUARTER 2022

### Biblical Guidelines For Stewardship

The Bible is full of examples, instructions, and warnings about money. In Moses' Law, God provided guidelines for ethical financial dealings with people, and both Solomon and Jesus spoke much about being faithful stewards over money and all material goods which have been entrusted into our care. In searching out these things, we find the scriptures address financial matters by dealing with the *heart*, showing us characteristics to embrace or avoid. And when the heart is right, we will find solutions to even the most difficult situations. May God give us each understanding as we study what makes a *faithful steward*.

—Angela Gellenbeck

**JANUARY 2, 2022**

### CALLED TO BE STEWARDS

**Luke 16:1** And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods.

**2** And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward.

**3** Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed.

**4** I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.

**5** So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord?

**6** And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty.

**7** Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore.

**8** And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.

**9** And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.

**10** He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.

**11** If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?

**12** And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?

**13** No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

**I Corinthians 6:19** What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

**20** For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

**I Peter 4:10** As every man hath received of the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

**MEMORY VERSE:** So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. —**Romans 14:12**

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** We are all stewards, not owners, of the many gifts of God and shall all give account of our stewardship; therefore we, being aware that we are not our own, should live and do all for the glory and honor of God and for the benefit of mankind.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

Luke 16:1 “Steward”: a manager of a household; treasurer; guardian. The steward “was generally a freedman—a slave released from forced, legal servitude” (*Thayer*). “One who superintends domestic concerns, and ministers to the support of the family, having the products of the field, business, etc., put into his hands for this very purpose” (*Clarke's Commentary*). “Wasted”: scatter; squander; dissipate.

Luke 16:8 “The lord”: the master of the servant in the story; not the Lord Jesus.

Luke 16:9 “Mammon of unrighteousness” and (verse 11) “unrighteous mammon”: “a Hebrew word, and cognate to the Punic language. What the Punics call *mammon*, is called in Latin, ‘lucre.’ What the Hebrews call *mammon*, is called in Latin, ‘riches’” (*St. Augustine*). The opposite of “true riches” (verse 11). Mammon “covers the whole ground of all possible external and material possessions, whatsoever things a man can only have in outward seeming, whatsoever things belong only to the region of sense and the present. All that is in the world, in fact, is included in the one name” (*MacLaren's Expositions*).

Luke 16:10 “Faithful”: trustworthy; reliable. “Of persons who show themselves faithful in the transaction of business, the execution of commands, or the discharge of official duties” (*Thayer's Greek Lexicon*).

Luke 16:11 “True riches”: the true spiritual wealth of peace, pardon, wisdom, the graces of the gospel, spiritual blessings, heavenly treasures. “So in the deepest analysis, and in the truest understanding of these two contrasted classes of wealth you have but the old antithesis: the

world—and God. He that has God is rich, however poor he may be in reference to the other category; and he that has Him not is poor, however rich he may be” (*MacLaren’s Expositions*).

## LESSON BACKGROUND

As Jesus spoke this lesson to His disciples, the Pharisees standing nearby also heard it and derided Him. Jesus, discerning their covetousness, reproved them and said, “Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.” Later, He pressed His point with another story, this time about the rich man and the poor man, Lazarus. I notice that the Lord often struck at the heart of the Pharisees’ problem with covetousness. They criticized Jesus for eating with unwashed hands; He reminded them of their covetous allowance of disobedience to the fifth commandment so their coffers could be filled with money which should have been used to care for elderly parents. He observed their manner of throwing in their offerings ostentatiously and commended the poor widow who quietly dropped in all her living allowance. He told about the wealthy tycoon whose soul was unexpectedly required of him.

This story of the unjust steward has been designated as the most difficult of all Jesus told. The true meaning of the steward’s actions and his lord’s commendation is a puzzle to many: is Jesus recommending that His followers do as this cunning, unfaithful man did? Some people have even tried to say the story promotes a “Robin Hood” kind of behavior of robbing the unlawfully rich and giving the money to the poor. Surely not!

Most of the scholars find sense in deciding that Jesus is looking at the forethought and effort the people of this world expend in order to gain financial security, and lamenting the lack of that kind of effort for spiritual treasure put forth by “children of light.”

The lesson about the steward is foundational to all of Jesus’ doctrines about literal and spiritual wealth. The concept of stewardship is basic to our understanding of our relationship with God and with our fellowman. If we can grasp this concept and understand it with our hearts, it will regulate all our dealings in this world, balance our affections, prioritize our loyalties, and establish our convictions. The knowledge that we are managers and not owners, and that we will have to give an account for our life’s dealings at the judgment should cause us to question soberly: What does it mean for me to be faithful? What are the true riches? How should I live?

—Angela Gellenbeck

## DISCUSSION:

1. The steward was trying to secure a place for himself when he was put out of a job. In the same way, how can we spiritually prepare for eternity?
2. Give the meanings of the words *mammon* and *true riches*.

3. *Another man's* and *your own* are terms referring to what kind of wealth
4. As stewards, we are required to be \_\_\_\_\_.
5. We must all give \_\_\_\_\_ to God.

### **LIFE APPLICATION**

Consider these words of John Wesley: "Now, this is exactly the case of every man, with relation to God. We are not at liberty to use what he has lodged in our hands as we please, but as He pleases, who alone is the possessor of heaven and earth, and the Lord of every creature. We have no right to dispose of anything we have, but according to His will, seeing we are not proprietors of any of these things; they are all, as our Lord speaks, belonging to another person; nor is anything properly our own, in the land of our pilgrimage. We shall not receive our own things, till we come to our own country. Eternal things only are our own: With all these temporal things we are barely entrusted by another, the Disposer and Lord of all. And He entrusts us with them on this express condition, that we use them only as our Master's goods, and according to the particular directions which He has given us in His Word.

"The Lord of all will inquire, 'How didst thou employ the worldly goods which I lodged in thy hands? Didst thou use thy food, not so as to seek or place thy happiness therein, but so as to preserve thy body in health, in strength and vigour, a fit instrument for the soul? Didst thou use apparel, not to nourish pride or vanity, much less to tempt others to sin, but conveniently and decently to defend thyself from the injuries of the weather? Didst thou prepare and use thy house, and all other conveniences, with a single eye to My glory—in every point seeking not thy own honour, but Mine; studying to please, not thyself, but Me? once more: in what manner didst thou employ that comprehensive talent, money?—not in gratifying the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, or the pride of life; not squandering it away in vain expenses—the same as throwing it into the sea; not hoarding it up to leave behind thee—the same as burying it in the earth; but first supplying thy own reasonable wants, together with those of thy family; then restoring the remainder to me, through the poor, whom I had appointed to receive it; looking upon thyself as only one of that number of poor, whose wants were to be supplied out of that part of my substance which I had placed in thy hands for this purpose; leaving thee the right of being supplied first, and the blessedness of giving rather than receiving? Wast thou accordingly a general benefactor to mankind? feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, comforting the sick, assisting the stranger, relieving the afflicted, according to their various necessities? Wast thou eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame, a father to the fatherless, and an husband to the widow? And didst thou labour to improve all outward works of mercy, as means of saving souls from death?'"

—Angela Gellenbeck

## REFLECTIONS

John Wesley taught at length on stewardship, so here is more food for thought from him, along with an anecdote that reveals some of the impetus for his convictions:

The founder of Methodism, John Wesley (1703-1791), while in his 20s, had a deeply disturbing experience. On a cold winter day, he was visited by a poor woman. Seeing her, he said, "You seem half-starved. Have you nothing to cover you but that thin linen gown?" She said, "Sir, this is all I have." He reached in his pocket for money so she could buy a coat but found he had hardly any left after having just bought some pictures for his room. It immediately hit him, "Thou hast adorned thy walls with the money which might have screened this poor creature from the cold! O justice! O mercy! Are not these pictures the blood of this poor maid?"

After this insight Wesley committed himself to living as frugally as possible, in order to give as much as possible. As his income increased, his standard of living did not. He just gave more away.

In a sermon called "The Use of Money," he proposed "three plain rules:" 1. Gain all you can; 2. Save all you can; 3. Give all you can. He stated that the proper use of money was a subject greatly neglected by religious folks and that "poets, orators and philosophers, in almost all ages and nations" rail against money "as the grand corrupter of the world, the bane of virtue, the pest of human society." Wesley claimed this was a terrible mistake.

"'The love of money,' we know, 'is the root of all evil;' but not the thing itself. The fault does not lie in the money, but in them that use it. It may be used ill: and what may not? But it may likewise be used well: It is full as applicable to the best, as to the worst uses. It is an excellent gift of God, answering the noblest ends. In the hands of His children, it is food for the hungry, drink for the thirsty, raiment for the naked ... a defense for the oppressed, a means of health to the sick, of ease to them that are in pain." (Excerpt from <https://www.dailypress.com/life/dp-fea-religion-column-warren-0701-story.html>).

—Fari Matthews

**JANUARY 9, 2022**

## THANKFULNESS AND CONTENTMENT

**Deuteronomy 8:10** When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the LORD thy God for the good land which he hath given thee.

**11** Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day:

**12** Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein;

**13** And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied;

**14** Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the LORD thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage;

**15** Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint;

**16** Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end;

**17** And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth.

**18** But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day.

**Deuteronomy 28:47** Because thou servedst not the LORD thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things;

**48a** Therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the LORD shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things.

**Luke 3:14** And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.

**Romans 1:21** Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

**Psalms 100:1** Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands.

**2** Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing.

**3** Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

**4** Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.

**Philippians 4:11** Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

**Colossians 3:15** And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

**16** Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

**17** And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

**I Timothy 6:6** But godliness with contentment is great gain.

**7** For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

**8** And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me. —

### **Hebrews 13:5-6**

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Contentment and thankfulness are prerequisites for faithfulness, honesty, trust in God, and generosity, because when we focus on what God has given and what He has already done for us, we are persuaded He will supply for future needs as well.

### **WORD DEFINITIONS**

I Timothy 6:6 “Contentment”: Competency; a mind satisfied with its lot. “The word occurs elsewhere in the New Testament only in II Corinthians 9:8, where it is rendered, both in the R.V. and the A.V., ‘sufficiency.’ The adjective, found in Philippians 4:11 (and common in classical Greek), is rendered ‘content.’ It means ‘sufficient in or of itself’—needing no external aid” (*Pulpit Commentary*).

I Timothy 6:8 “Raiment”: The word which we translate *raiment* “signifies covering in general; and here means house or lodging, as well as clothing...He that has more than these is rich in the sense in which the apostle uses the term” (*Clarke’s Commentary*).

Hebrews 13:5 “Conversation”: disposition; turn of mind. “Content”: to suffice; to be enough. “With such things as ye have”: “With present things; with present riches, or with present poverty; with present losses and crosses; with present reproaches and afflictions; and contentment with these things shows itself by thankfulness for every mercy, and by submission to the will and providence of God in every state of life” (*Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible*).

Hebrews 13:6 “Leave”: The withdrawing of a hand that sustains. “I will not drop thee” (*MacLaren’s Expositions*). “Nor forsake thee”: utterly forsake or cast off.

### **LESSON BACKGROUND**

The passage at the beginning of Deuteronomy is a solemn warning; the latter mention is a sorrowful lament for the way the warning was completely disregarded. Together, with the apostle’s commentary in Romans, you have an explanation of the Israelites’ sin and its consequences in just a few words: the idolatry, the vain and covetous behavior, and the resulting religious darkness, famine, starvation, and exile.

It is so tragic how it played out in history, just as it was prophesied in Deuteronomy 28 over three thousand years ago. Israel was carried away to Babylon. The people who had been chosen by God were scattered over the earth. Years later, they were taken by the Romans and their beautiful capital city, Jerusalem, was destroyed. In AD 79-81, the emperor, Titus, carried



them back to Egypt in ships, just as this chapter predicted, and it happened again in AD 117-138 by Hadrian.

When John the Baptist was preaching by the Jordan River, he instructed the people who were repenting and seeking baptism. The soldiers, either Roman or Jewish, employed, as the Publicans were, by the Romans, who came to him asked, “What are we supposed to do?” His answer was, in part, that they should be content with their wages, or daily allowances, including food. They were not to take part in mutiny or extortion in order to obtain more.

The great sins mentioned in the context of the verse in Romans were a direct result of the lack of being thankful and glorifying God as God. Likewise, thankfulness and contentment were the groundwork of the godly, exalted state of well-being God’s people enjoyed while they kept His worship and obeyed His laws.

—Angela Gellenbeck

## **DISCUSSION:**

1. 1. Give the root cause of Israel’s sins and captivity.
2. 2. What is the danger of being “full” and having financial success?
3. 3. Share what happened literally to Israel in fulfillment to the prophecies in Deuteronomy 28.
4. 4. What is truly great wealth, according to I Timothy 6:6?
5. 5. We can be thankful and have contentment because of what promise?

## **LIFE APPLICATION**

We praise because we are so dependent. Anything we have is because God has been merciful. We are grateful because none of us can claim, “I’m a self-made man.” Anytime someone in history has made those kinds of claims (think Nebuchadnezzar!), God in His mercy brought him down. When Israel ceased to be thankful for what they had been given, they doubted God and went into idolatry.

Both Psalms and Colossians mention the kind of thankfulness and praise that breaks forth into singing. The proper way to enter the presence of God to worship is with singing. Hebrews continues later in the chapter by admonishing us to continually offer the sacrifice of praise, “giving thanks to His name” (Hebrews 13:15). That leaves little time for complaining!

Hebrews 13:6 also gives us the reason why: His promise that His hand will ever sustain us and hold us up. He will never utterly forsake us. Having this kind of contentment in our lives keeps us from covetousness and its companion evils, dishonesty and theft, as well as fear, worry, doubt, murmuring, complaining and bitterness.

—Angela Gellenbeck

## REFLECTIONS

Job gave us a perfect example in the Old Testament of how we should handle wealth as well as poverty. He understood where wealth came from and he also understood lack of it did not diminish God's power nor his love to mankind. "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21).

Being wealthy will not keep you out of heaven. On the other hand, being poor will not get you into heaven. It is not wrong to have financial obligations, but we are to faithfully pay back those obligations. It is also not wrong to gain wealth, but we must constantly be aware that the Lord gave it. Our duty is to praise Him and give unselfishly, understanding that the Lord is in control of it all. It is not sinful to be wealthy nor is it sinful to be poor. The sin lies in our perception of the place that we are in: are we contented in the Lord? Are we completely satisfied in our service to Him? Does He complete all of our being?

Our cup of contentment is to be filled with the God who died to redeem us; He desires to be our everything! Paul stated it well: "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:12-13).

—LaDawna Adams

**JANUARY 16, 2022**

## TRUST IN GOD

**Proverbs 3:5** Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

**6** In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

**7** Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.

**8** It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones.

**9** Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase:

**10** So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.

**Matthew 6:24** No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

**25** Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

**26** Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

**27** Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

**28** And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:

**29** And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

**30** Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

**31** Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

**32** (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

**33** But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

**34** Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.

—Psalm 37:3-5

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** An important part of being a good steward is trusting God, as the Source and Giver of all that we have, to direct in the right path and supply whatever we need.

## WORD DEFINITIONS

Proverbs 3:5 “Trust”: “Assured resting of the mind on the integrity, veracity, justice, friendship, or other sound principle of another person; confidence; reliance” (*Webster’s Revised Unabridged Dictionary*).

Proverbs 3:6 “Acknowledge him”: know Him; own Him; discover him. Set Him before you; have Him always in view. “He shall”: He, Himself. “Direct”: make it plain; straight, even. He will remove all obstacles.

Proverbs 3:9 “Thy substance”: capital. The Septuagint has “thy just labors.” “First-fruits”: the first or best. “Increase”: revenue. “The injunctions...oppose all selfish use of God’s temporal gifts, and lead to the thought that, in obeying them, we are only giving back to God what are his own. ‘The silver and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts’ (Haggai

2:28)” (*Pulpit Commentary*).

Proverbs 3:10 “Thy presses”: vats into which the newly pressed juice flowed. “Burst out”: overflow; abound.

Matthew 6:25 “Thought”: have the mind pulled apart or divided by cares and worries; over-anxious. “The temper against which our Lord warns His disciples is not that of foresight, which merely provides for the future, but the allowing ourselves to be harassed and vexed with its uncertainties” (*Ellicott’s Commentary for English Readers*). “God gave the life and the body; will He not give the smaller gifts of food and clothing?” (*Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*).

Matthew 6:27 “Stature”: height; an oftener meaning in Scripture is “age.” If this is the meaning here, He is saying that a man, by anxious thought, cannot add even a small amount to the length of his life.

Matthew 6:32 “Gentiles”: heathen nations of the world. “I never realised how true the statement of Jesus is till I read the Vedic Hymns, the prayer book and song book of the Indian Aryans. With the exception of a few hymns to Varuna, in which sin is confessed and pardon begged, most hymns, especially those to Indra, contain prayers only for material goods: cows, horses, green pastures, good harvests” (*Expositor’s Greek Testament*).

Matthew 6:34 “Evil”: trouble or sorrow.

Psalms 37:3 “Verily thou shalt be fed”: “Heb. thou shalt be fed (i.e. every way provided for) in truth, i.e. truly or assuredly; or with or by faith, as this word signifies, i. e. by thy trusting in the Lord; thou shalt live by thy faith, as is said, Habakkuk 2:4” (*Matthew Poole’s Commentary*).

Psalms 37:5 “Commit thy way”: *Roll thy way upon Jehovah*. Probably a metaphor taken from the way a camel lies down and shifts his load off of his back. “He shall bring it to pass”: *He shall do it, or He shall work for thee*.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

In chapters 1 through 9 of Proverbs, a “master is represented as instructing his scholar, giving him admonitions, directions, cautions, and excitements to the study of wisdom” (*Clarke’s Commentary*). Our lesson contains admonitions from chapter 3. Here Solomon begins by an entreaty to not forget God’s laws, but to “write them upon the table of thine heart.” The complete admonition begins with this entreaty and ends with the promise of abundance for those who trust God, lean on Him for direction, own Him as Lord of all and Giver of all, and yield back to Him the best of all with which God has entrusted him.

The part of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5, 6, and 7) where Jesus forbade anxious care is similarly given in Luke 12 following the parable of the rich fool, where He warned against covetousness. In the reading in Matthew 6, Jesus had just been teaching about prayer and had reminded the listeners about their Heavenly Father who knows “what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.” He repeats that truth in verse 32. In the example of the Lord’s

Prayer, “Give us this day our daily bread,” we are also reminded of our true Source. The whole admonition continually points our hearts back to Him and His daily care for us. “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32).

Psalm 37, generally attributed to David, opens with the command, “Fret not!” It is certainly a human tendency to fret when we see others in the world prospering and the children of God suffering losses. Psalm 73 tells how the prophet Asaph almost slipped from his faith in God by being envious at the prosperity of the wicked. His deliverance was to go into the sanctuary of the Lord; then he understood the end of the wicked man. “God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever,” he concluded. So our trust must be anchored in God, who is our portion. We can trust Him to provide; all we have comes from Him.

—Angela Gellenbeck

## **DISCUSSION:**

1. What are the instructions in Proverbs 3:5-10, and what are the promises?
2. What is the true meaning of the command, “Take no thought”? Does this mean we can’t plan for the future?
3. What is meant by “stature” in Matthew 25:27?
4. What is meant by “commit thy way”?
5. What should be the basis for all our thoughts about finances and business?

## **LIFE APPLICATION**

When we realize we are just stewards, that God has entrusted us with so many good things in abundance, and has fed us and cared for us so tenderly; when we focus on His goodness and bountifulness and praise and thank Him for the many gifts in our lives, we are then in a good position to trust Him to care for us in the future. We find it much easier to rely on the One to whom we are so indebted. We believe Him when He says, “I will never leave you. I will never fail or forsake you.”

We also have more faith to pray about everything. Instead of fretting or worrying, we are encouraged to take large and small burdens to the Lord. We go ahead and work and plan as wise stewards should, yet the bondage, fear, and anxiety are gone. We trust His promises that as we give freely, He will supply our needs.

Let us rely on the promise that as we seek His kingdom and His righteousness first, He will add the necessary things of life to us. Having the true riches of His kingdom satisfies the longings of the soul! We will find our longings for the temporal things of this world diminishing as we increase the treasures of His kingdom in our hearts.

—Angela Gellenbeck

## REFLECTIONS

C. W. Naylor, a man who suffered 41 years of extreme physical infirmity, wrote: “Hath a mortal yet been found who hath trusted Him in vain? Search the whole broad space of earth around, and search it once again.” – Evening Light Songs #334, verse 3.

Another songwriter, Louisa Stead, wrote: “Jesus, Jesus, how I trust Him! How I’ve proved Him o’er and o’er! Jesus, Jesus, precious Jesus! O for grace to trust Him more!”

“How fitting that a missionary should write this hymn about faith and trust. Louisa M. R. Stead was born about 1850 in Dover, England, and became a Christian at age nine. She felt a burden to become a missionary in her teenage years. When she was 21 or so, she immigrated to the United States and attended a revival meeting in Urbana, Ohio. There, the Lord deeply impressed her with a ringing missionary call.

“She made plans to go to China, but her hopes were dashed when her health proved too frail for the climate there. Shortly afterward, she married a man named Stead. But sometime around 1879 or 1880, Mr. Stead drowned off the coast of Long Island. Some accounts say that he saved a boy who was drowning, and other accounts say both Mr. Stead and the boy perished. Other records suggest it was his own four-year-old daughter, Lily, that he saved. In any event, the family’s beach-side picnic ended in tragedy for Louisa.

“Shortly afterward, taking little Lily, Louisa went to South Africa as a missionary. ... Louisa was left with no means of support. She and her daughter experienced dire poverty. One morning, when she had neither funds nor food for the day, she opened the front door and found that someone had left food and money on her doorstep. That day she wrote this hymn, ‘Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus.’”

—Adapted from “Then Sings My Soul,” by Robert J. Morgan  
and “The Complete Book of Hymns,”  
by William J. Petersen and Ardythe Petersen  
—Harlan Sorrell

**JANUARY 23, 2022**

## FAITHFULNESS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

**Luke 12:48b** For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

**Luke 16:10** He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.

**11** If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?

**12** And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?

**Luke 19:12** He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.

**13** And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.

**14** But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.

**15** And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.

**16** Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds.

**17** And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.

**18** And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds.

**19** And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities.

**20** And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin:

**21** For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow.

**22** And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow:

**23** Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury?

**24** And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds.

**25** (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.)

**26** For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him.

**27** But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. —**I Corinthians 4:2**

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** In God’s final analysis of my life, faithfulness—doing everything with the awareness that I am going to give an account, that little things are just as important as big things, and that true, loyal, devoted service is due to the Master—is the deciding factor, whether I have been given little or much responsibility.

### **WORD DEFINITIONS**

Luke 19:13 “Occupy till I come”: a verb only found this one time in the New Testament; a compound form of it is in verse 15, “gained by trading.” It means “do business with” or “make the most of your money.”

### **LESSON BACKGROUND**

The parable of the pounds in Luke 19 differs somewhat from the parable in Matthew 25, in that Jesus speaks of “pounds” in Luke 19, as opposed to “talents” in Matthew 25. In today’s lesson, distribution of pounds was divided equally among the ten servants. A kingdom of citizens who rejected His kingship is also part of the story. Otherwise, the details are very similar. Jesus is teaching a lesson about accountability and faithfulness in the spiritual economy of His kingdom.

There are Old Testament examples of the lesson as well. Joseph was so faithful to Potiphar that he suffered prison rather than betray Potiphar in the matter of his wife. Moses was described in Numbers 12:7 as being “faithful” in God’s house. Joshua and Caleb, out of all the men who came out of Egypt, were faithful to God, wholly followed Him, and were able to go in and possess the promised land. Nehemiah chose his brother, Hanani, the ruler of the palace, to be in charge of the entire city of Jerusalem, because he was a “faithful man, and feared God above many” (Nehemiah 7:2). In II Kings 12:15 and 22:7 we read that no accounting or oversight was needed for the workmen repairing the house of the Lord under kings Joash and later, Josiah, because the workmen “dealt faithfully.” Daniel had such an excellent spirit that Darius set him over the princes to keep account, so that “the king should have no damage” (Daniel 6:2). In each of these examples we learn that God blesses and rewards those who willingly take the task given to them, obey God’s will no matter what hardships they endure, and do a good job whether or not anyone is observing them.

—Angela Gellenbeck

### **DISCUSSION:**

1. The parable in Luke 19 is similar to the one in \_\_\_\_\_ 25. Discuss the similarities/differences.
2. Jesus said those who were given much would be \_\_\_\_\_ much



3. Those who were faithful in \_\_\_\_\_ would be faithful also in \_\_\_\_\_.
4. What did faithfulness mean in the parable of the pounds? How did the last servant prove unfaithful?
5. Show how faithfulness is linked to accountability.

### **LIFE APPLICATION**

It is so important that we each keep the concept that we are accountable in our hearts at all times. This requires faith that *God is* and that He is watching. He is recording what we are doing. Our deeds should be done with this in mind, not the idea that we will be seen and commended of men, for “not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth” and “not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God,” doing our work “heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men” (II Corinthians 10:18 and Colossians 3:22-23).

Another important concept is the importance of little things. It was one small commandment that Eve disobeyed, yet the implications were huge. Honesty about small details could decide whether you are rejected or chosen for an important job.

Faithfulness in financial matters is also very important in God’s sight. God may be leading and equipping you to be a minister of the gospel. Satan will tempt you to err in your ways of handling money because he knows that a “little” unfaithfulness will disqualify you for the job. How will people be able to trust you or I to faithfully handle the matters of their souls when we cannot pay our bills or meet obligations we have promised to clients? Whether one is called to the ministry or not, however, how can we receive blessing from Him in whom there is “no shadow of turning” if our lives are shadowed with less-than-upright business transactions? “A faithful man who can find?” (Proverbs 20:6).

—Angela Gellenbeck

### **REFLECTIONS**

As we were leaving the chapel grounds, my grandson asked me, “What is faithfulness?” I cast about in my mind how to explain faithfulness to a seven year old, then I thought of a dear sister in our congregation who is an example of faithfulness. Problem solved! “You see Sis. \_\_\_\_\_? What does she do?” It didn’t take long for him to make a list: she’s the first one at church to get it open, teaches Sunday school, organizes various events for the young people and congregation, and often is the last to leave carrying a bag of trash. This dear sister also had parents that were examples of faithfulness, and they left her with a charge to “keep the church doors open.” She’s been faithful to that charge, but who’s going to keep it when she’s gone on to her reward? Would anyone be able to point to you as an example of faithfulness?

—Sarah L. Herron

**JANUARY 30, 2022**

**INDUSTRY AND HARD WORK**

**Genesis 3:19** In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

**Psalms 104:23** Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening.

**Proverbs 6:6** Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise:

**7** Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler,

**8** Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.

**Proverbs 10:4** He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich.

**Proverbs 13:4** The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.

**11** Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished, but he that gathereth by labour shall increase.

**Proverbs 22:29** Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men.

**Proverbs 31:10** Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.

**27** She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.

**Ephesians 4:28** Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

**II Thessalonians 3:6** Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.

**7** For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you;

**8** Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you:

**9** Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us.

**10** For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.

**11** For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing.

—II Thessalonians 3:12-13

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Work and industry is enjoined in Scripture, from the Old Testament to the New, as being a command given to Adam and Eve, as being part of the Old Law, and is very much connected to the Christian faith and experience under the new dispensation.

### WORD DEFINITIONS

Proverbs 10:4 “Slack”: negligent; idle; also, deceitful. “Diligent”: comes from a word meaning *sharpen*; sharp; acute. The word is also translated *trench* (as of the sharp tool for digging one), decision (a sharp mind; decisive), *threshing instrument* (sharp tool), or *gold*, as of the sharp edge of the miner’s tools or the decisive earnestness with which the gold miner goes about his work.

Proverbs 31:10 “Virtuous”: strength; efficiency; valiant; able. A woman of faculty, capacity and ability.

Proverbs 31:27 “Looketh well”: keeps watch or careful surveillance over all that goes on in the family. “The bread of idleness”: the bread of an idle woman, without labor. A virtuous woman feeds upon bread won by active labor and conscientious diligence.

II Thessalonians 3:7 “Follow”: imitate. “Disorderly”: a word applied to soldiers out of rank.

II Thessalonians 3:8 “Chargeable”: a word that contains the idea of a burdensome expense.

II Thessalonians 3:9 “Ensample”: example; pattern; model. From a word which signifies any mark that is cut or engraven to stamp things into its own likeness.

II Thessalonians 3:10 “If any would not work...”: “‘Let him not be fed.’ The Thessalonians are not to be misled into a false charity: giving food in Christ’s name to persons who are capable of working and able to get work, and are too indolent to do so. The support which is here forbidden to be given to these disorderly persons might come either directly from the private liberality of individuals, or from some collected church fund administered by the deacons” (*Ellicott’s Commentary for English Readers*).

II Thessalonians 3:11 “Busybodies”: over-busy; over-doing; a bustling disposition; busy in useless and superfluous things; minding everybody’s business but their own.

II Thessalonians 3:12 “With quietness”: with silence; calmness of spirit and noiseless modesty; the opposite of bustling.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

In Eden Adam was given the work of keeping and maintaining the garden, and Eve was to be his helper. After they fell into transgression, God gave Adam the command that he was to labor in the sweat of his brow; he was still to work, but because of sin it would just be harder now, with sweat and sorrow—hard labor—associated with it. Eve’s work of bearing children and maintaining a home would also be with sorrow—hard labor. That has been the duty of the man and woman ever since. Satan tempts people to try to get the laborer’s reward by theft, idleness or deceit. God ordained that men should *work*.

In the law, God instituted the command, “Honour the sabbath day” by designating that six days were for men to work. He made the Sabbath for man, Jesus said, for his health and well-being; that after hard work, it was commanded for him to rest. All during the continuance of the law, this literal rest was strictly enjoined. The New Testament covenant obviously made changes for the worship and practice of believers in Christ; the rest was not confined to a certain day; neither was the worship or holiness. A spiritual significance was given to the Sabbath-day rest. However, the importance of labor was not any less, and the apostle endeavored to bring this out to the Thessalonians when he let them know that the gifts of charity were not passed out to those who would not work. We should also consider that the literal Sabbath was made for our health and well-being, and although the spiritual meaning took the emphasis off of a certain day, the principle of giving the body and mind a day of rest is still wise and beneficial. The early Christians paused on the first day of the week to gather and worship in commemoration of the resurrection, and to collect offerings for the poor.

Work is God’s gift to mankind. The poet’s beautiful observation of the divine order of creation in Psalm 104 includes the picture of man going to his God-ordained labor each morning and returning home each evening. We have used several verses from Proverbs to show the wisdom and honor of diligent labor. The words of Lemuel’s mother, as she painted a picture of the industrious woman whom she recommended for his wife, show a woman who isn’t afraid or too slothful to do the work of the home.

The apostle shows in Ephesians 4 the purpose of honest labor: that an individual might have something he or she could give to someone else in a time of need. Paul was an example of the doctrine he preached. He was a tentmaker, laboring earnestly so that the saints in various congregations where he ministered would not be encumbered by supporting him financially.

—Angela Gellenbeck

## DISCUSSION:

1. When was the command for a man to work first given?
2. Share how God balanced work with rest in the law.

3. Share how Paul enjoined honest toil, and how he was an example of it.
4. What woman in the Old Testament instructed her son about the industry of the wife?
5. What New Testament verse explains the purpose for honest labor?

### **LIFE APPLICATION**

I Timothy 5:8 says, "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." This scripture shows the great spiritual importance connected with honest labor and the responsibility that is placed upon the head of each family. For many years our society, as a professed God-fearing nation, placed that same value on the man's responsibility in the home. The values of our society began to change when women started to leave the home and join the workforce, big government began to entice men by promising financial support without having to labor for it, and men have shifted their responsibility as heads of their homes onto others and have drifted into substance abuse and lives of shame. The disintegration of the home comes at a high moral and financial cost to our country. For a society to remain free from governmental tyranny, the members of that society must retain responsibility and honor.

We must, as Christian brethren, be lights before this godless society in even this part of our religion. We must teach our young men and women to be faithful in their God-given places in the home; to value and love hard work; and to refuse the empty and indolent lifestyles of drunkenness, inordinate pleasure and selfishness!

—Angela Gellenbeck

### **REFLECTIONS**

Growing up, my father would sometimes recount to his children something passed along to him from his maternal grandmother. She felt that her father, called "Papa" by everyone in the region, was the meanest man alive, so while still at home she determined that she would "marry the first thing that came along in pants!" Well, along came this jockey-sized man who took an interest in her, and they married. However, her new husband let her know of an epiphany he had as a youth, saying, "I said 'Work' was my mother and I vowed I'd never hit her a lick!" Sad to say, with him never intending to work a day in his life, the marriage did not last and the two separated, leaving my great-grandmother alone to fend for herself and their two young daughters.

Every time my father related this story to us I found my great-grandfather's statement humorous, but Daddy had a serious reason for sharing this story with us. You see, he had no intention of us adopting the attitude toward work that our great-grandfather had, or even to follow in his own footsteps when it came to work. He himself as a boy only had a single chore—to take out the trash—and all the other household work was done by his mother and older

sisters. He had no father around to show him duties for which men are generally responsible, so when he and my mother married, she was appalled to learn what little he could do. When each of their first five children ended up being boys, they determined that in their household there would be no such thing as "boys' work" and "girls' work", there was just "work." We all learned to cook, clean, do laundry, mow lawns, do yard work, paint, fix minor plumbing issues, help out with home remodeling, do some basic carpentry, and work together to perform whatever was needed to keep our home maintained. We often teased our little sisters, once they came along, how happy we were to have sisters so we could divvy up the work at home along more traditional lines.

Ultimately, what we were taught is that God has ordained that both men and women learn to be partners in fulfilling all He has called a family to do, whether in the home, at church, or in assisting others in need. Namely, to obey the words of the Preacher when he said, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might..."

—Fari Matthews

**FEBRUARY 6, 2022**

### **HONESTY AND INTEGRITY**

**Leviticus 19:11** Ye shall not steal, neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another.

**12** And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the LORD.

**13** Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him: the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning. (See also **Proverbs 3:27-28**, **Jeremiah 22:13**, and **James 5:4**.)

**15** Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty: but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour.

**Deuteronomy 23:24** When thou comest into thy neighbour's vineyard, then thou mayest eat grapes thy fill at thine own pleasure; but thou shalt not put any in thy vessel.

**25** When thou comest into the standing corn of thy neighbour, then thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand; but thou shalt not move a sickle unto thy neighbour's standing corn.

**Proverbs 11:1** A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight.

**Proverbs 12:17** He that speaketh truth sheweth forth righteousness: but a false witness deceit.

**22** Lying lips are abomination to the LORD: but they that deal truly are his delight.

**Proverbs 20:14** It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer: but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth.

**Luke 16:10** He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.

**Romans 12:17** Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

**Romans 13:7** Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

**8** Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.

**9** For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

**10** Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

**Ephesians 4:25** Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.

**28** Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men. —**II Corinthians 8:21**

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Various teachings of Moses' law, the wisdom of Solomon, and the teachings of Jesus and the apostles combine to give us a complete picture of the heart intentions, words and actions of the man of honesty, integrity, and truth.

## WORD DEFINITIONS

Leviticus 19:13 "Defraud": oppress; wrong; extort; get deceitfully.

Proverbs 11:1 "Balance": a pair of scales for weighing money or goods.

Proverbs 20:14 "It is naught, it is naught": "It is worthless!"

Romans 13:7 "Tribute": land tax. "Custom": mercantile tax. "Fear": reverence for superiors. "Honour": respect due to persons of distinction.

Romans 13:8 "Owe no man anything, but to love one another": "Acquit yourselves of all obligations except love, which is a debt that must remain ever due" (*Hodge*). For men to "run into debt, and take no care to pay, but live upon the property and substance of others, is scandalous to them as men, and greatly unbecoming professors of religion, and brings great reproach upon the Gospel of Christ" (*Gill's*). "Leave toward no one any obligation unfulfilled" (*Meyer's*).

## LESSON BACKGROUND

It is so interesting to read the various commands of Moses' law, as they give us a picture of God's heart of absolute fairness and justice. He wanted His people to be fair and honest to a scruple. If your cow wandered into the neighbor's garden and ate his corn, you were to replace it with the best of your corn. If you borrowed your neighbor's axe and broke the head, you just bought your neighbor a new axe, unless the neighbor happened to be working along with you, or you had paid rent for the tool. If the man who had done you wrong was missing his goat and you found it, you were required to bring it to its owner. Note the honesty, justice, and selflessness in these commands. The *principle* was, "Love thy neighbor as thyself."

Today's lesson contains commandments concerning these things: theft, lying and false swearing, perversion of judgment, and the withholding of wages. Deuteronomy 23:24-25 balances neighborly generosity with neighborly honor: I was to allow my neighbor to pick a handful of my grapes as he passed by my vineyard; on the other hand, he was to respect me by taking a handful but no more. He couldn't come into my yard with his bucket. Nor was he to bring his sickle to get corn from my field, but I should allow him a few ears as a neighborly gift.

The false balance mentioned in Proverbs 11:1 was a familiar term in the law. A merchant could not use a set of weights to weigh produce he was selling, and then use a different set when he was buying. They had to be the same. The buyer could not downplay the value of what he wanted to buy so that the merchant would lower his price, and then go away with his ill-gotten bargain boasting about the deal he just made.

Jesus' words bring all these laws into focus for everyone of us personally. We are to be as hard on ourselves when it comes to fairness as we are on others. We are to be honest in little matters as well as in huge matters.

To the Roman Christians coming from a heathen lifestyle, Paul wrote detailed guidelines about daily life in the twelfth and thirteenth chapters. At the heart of it all was love and honor, and fairness and justice for all men. He also wrote to the converts at Ephesus emphasizing the drastic change from a life of wickedness and strife to a life of gentleness and love for everyone. Lying and stealing from your brother was the same as doing it to yourself, because you are all part of the same body; you're part of each other, he reminded them.

The memory verse calls our attention to an important detail: while we know that God sees our hearts and discerns our honesty, we should be very careful that the world around us knows, by our motives, words, and actions, that we are honest as well.

—Angela Gellenbeck

## DISCUSSION:

1. List the details mentioned in Leviticus that have to do with honest stewardship.
2. What do the scriptures teach about fair wages?



3. 3. Show how the illustration from Deuteronomy teaches a balance between honor and generosity.
4. 4. What truths about buying and selling are taught in Proverbs?
5. 5. What “law” fulfills all God’s commands?

### **LIFE APPLICATION**

Dishonesty was a common way of life for the heathen nations who had not been taught God’s laws. As God’s people were to walk uprightly, deal justly, and show a different way of business dealings—the law of love, the “Golden Rule.” Employers were obligated by God to pay those they hired on the day agreed upon. In those days, payment was due each day. God pronounced judgment upon those who withheld wages because of greed and arrogance.

We have seen such judgment carried out upon entire nations for the covetous practice of slave labor and injustice toward men considered of “lower class.” As Christian men began to seek God and repent of these terrible injustices, God moved in a great way to cause these practices to be abolished. Still today, we are to show loving-kindness toward all and do all we can to see that any semblance of racial superiority or desire to take the advantage of another is banished from our lives.

Everyone loves a bargain; however, always trying to get the best deal could bring us into less-than-noble or even shady business transactions if we are not consistently watchful and prayerful.

Love, the total fulfillment of every one of God’s laws, is the debt we owe to every person. We may, at different times in our lives, acquire some debt which we work diligently to pay off, but we will always owe this one. At the heart of a true steward of the Lord is this awareness, that I owe every man fairness, justice, and a love that considers his needs as important as, and sometimes more important than, my own.

—Angela Gellenbeck

### **REFLECTIONS**

A little girl sitting in her first grade class cannot keep her mind on the instructions of the teacher but is looking around the classroom and glancing at the bright sunshine through the classroom windows. Alas, the little girl does not hear the instructions of the teacher and looks at her paper in frustration because she does not know what to do. Her friend nearby has dutifully listened to the teacher and fills out her paper correctly. The little girl glances over at her friend’s paper and copies each answer down too.

The teacher is a stern and observant instructor who has seen all that has happened. She calls the little girl up to her desk and promptly gives a failing grade. She writes in red ink pen on the paper (cursive !) and instructs the little girl to take the paper home to her parents. When

the little girl arrives home, she tearfully hands the paper to her mother. The mother is able to read the red cursive writing that the young girl does not comprehend. She expresses her disappointment over her daughter's actions and correction is given.

Needless to say, that little girl was never ever tempted to be dishonest again! I was that little girl and I am thankful for the powerful lesson that I learned at six years old. I am glad that I was "caught."

We live in a world that is constantly looking for ways of "getting by" or being exonerated for crimes committed. But how much better it is to be "caught" now and have a chance to repent and make restitution than to wait for that final day of Judgment. On that day we will each one give account before a Judge who does not forget nor does He turn a blind eye. And the final recompense will be for eternity.

—LaDawna Adams

**FEBRUARY 13, 2022**

### **PREPAREDNESS**

**Proverbs 6:6** Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise:

**7** Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler,

**8** Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.

**9** How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?

**10** Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep:

**11** So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.

**Proverbs 14:15** The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going.

**Proverbs 22:3** A prudent man forseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished.

**Proverbs 24:27** Prepare thy work without, and make it fit for thyself in the field; and afterwards build thine house.

**Proverbs 31:21** She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. —**James 4:13-14**

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** While anxious care is forbidden by the Lord, the Bible teaches industry, forethought, and preparation for the future.

## WORD DEFINITIONS

Proverbs 6:6 “Sluggard”: slothful; indolent; lazy one. “Be wise”: restrain from acting in an evil manner; judge, govern; make firm; sound; free from defect by the exercise of skill (*Brown-Driver-Briggs*).

Proverbs 14:15 “Prudent”: crafty, in a good sense. Shrewd or sensible.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

The example of Joseph in Egypt illustrates this lesson very well. Divinely warned by God through Pharaoh’s striking dreams, Joseph recommended a plan to store the grain and produce from the plentiful years in preparation for the lean years to come. This was not considered by God to be an over-anxious state of mind, but a prudent and sensible mind that was able to foresee the calamities ahead and be ready for them.

The virtuous woman mentioned in the lesson today was pictured as someone who could rest assured her household was ready for cold weather, because she had been preparing clothing way ahead of time. The young man was advised to get his fields ready ahead of time, before he established his home, so that he could successfully feed his family.

Christ also advised to count the cost in the planning of a building, in order to see that adequate preparation and supplies will be available when they are needed. Of course, all of these literal examples point ahead to spiritual realities, but applied diligently to normal, earthly business, they are the course of wisdom.

The verses in James warn against presumptuous planning for the future. We are not to assume that life will always be as prosperous as it is today. Who knows what will happen tomorrow? Yet, as we remember that the steward in Luke 16 was commended for his foresight and planning, we also must take action in wise preparation for the future—temporally and spiritually.

—Angela Gellenbeck

## DISCUSSION:

1. What insect is used as an example in Proverbs? What can we learn from this?
2. What comes to a person who does not prepare for the future?
3. A prudent man looks \_\_\_\_\_ to his \_\_\_\_\_; he foresees \_\_\_\_\_.
4. A virtuous woman plans ahead and provides winter \_\_\_\_\_ for her household.
5. Show the difference between the future plans that are forbidden by the writer in James, and the prudent planning advised by the Proverbs writer.

## LIFE APPLICATION

The lesson today balances the concept of being prepared with the concept of trusting in the Lord. As prone to misunderstanding as humans are, it could happen that we get the wrong idea about trust in God and think, “Well, I’m just going to trust the Lord to feed me and my family and not even get a job or save any money.” It is important that we achieve the balance here, and, while not being over-anxious about the future, we must have a “sedate care and industrious confidence” (*Adam Clarke*).

Ants can teach us so much. They are constantly working; they work efficiently and together. They save what they don’t use; they even bite off the ends of grain so it won’t germinate during storage. By trying again and again, they move great loads heavier than themselves. They work all summer preparing for the winter ahead.

It’s not “faith” to be slothful and lazy. The Bible commands us to be like the ant. Our forefathers knew the worth of saving money, growing a garden and putting food into storage. Today’s youth would do well to learn these same lessons and find out how to prepare industriously for the future, according to God’s guidance, instead of presuming that our present prosperity will last forever.

—Angela Gellenbeck

## REFLECTIONS

### “How Can I Overcome Slothful Habits?”

*“Develop the Disciplines of Diligence.* The reproofs for slothfulness are painful: ‘The way of the slothful man is as a hedge of thorns...’ (Proverbs 15:19). Yet, there is hope for the sluggard. God gives instructions both to him and about him.

*“Study the Principles of Diligence.* If you tend to yield to slothfulness, determine to learn the principles of diligence and adopt them as a way of life. The ant illustrates basic characteristics that are lacking in the lives of those who are slothful: initiative, self-direction, respect for seasons, the ability to finish jobs, and foresight needed to plan for the future. Learn about the ant and memorize and study passages of scripture that address slothfulness and challenge you to become diligent. Read biographies of great Christians to learn how they developed diligence by obedience to God’s Word.

*“Recognize That Slothfulness Develops in Stages.* Slothful behavior is a temptation for all of us. Anyone can become a sluggard. The gradual development of slothfulness usually begins unnoticed; however, if left unchecked, it disables those who surrender to its appeal.

- Latent Slothfulness: the inward tendency to reject God’s requirement for diligent labor.
- Initial Slothfulness: making soft choices in daily decisions.
- Disabling Slothfulness: when ‘little’ surrenders to ease become a way of life.

“How can you counter the development of slothfulness? Instantly obey the promptings of the Holy Spirit, become accountable to others for completing tasks, and develop the discipline of fasting.

*“Counteract Slothfulness with Hunger.* One effective deterrent of slothfulness is hunger. ‘...If any would not work, neither should he eat’ (II Thessalonians 3:10). A fast, coupled with studying what the Bible says about diligence, is a good place to begin your battle against slothfulness.

*“Establish the Discipline of Rising Early.* Getting up early in the morning strikes at the very heart of slothfulness. If necessary, be accountable to others for getting up on time. Resist the temptation to get just a little more sleep. When you wake up, get up! A proper amount of sleep is essential for good health, and it is a gift from God. However, God warns us that too much sleep is destructive. ‘As the door turneth upon his hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed’ (Proverbs 26:14). ‘Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty; open thine eyes, and thou shalt be satisfied with bread’ (Proverbs 20:13). ‘He that gathereth in summer is a wise son: but he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame’ (Proverbs 10:5).

*“Learn to Value Time.* Time is one of life’s most valuable resources. (Ephesians 5:15–17). By considering how much time you actually spend on weekly activities, you will gain a fresh motivation for making the most of your minutes. For one week, keep a record of what you do every fifteen minutes. Evaluate how many of the week’s 168 hours you used for sleep, meals, work, study, rest, entertainment, and conversation. The results may shock you! Use this information to help you order your days with wisdom. ‘So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom (Psalm 90:12).’”

—An excerpt from the *Men’s Manual, Volume II*, IBLP Publications

—Submitted by Harlan Sorrell

**FEBRUARY 20, 2022**

## **SAVING AND SPENDING**

**Psalms 112:5** A good man sheweth favour, and lendeth: he will guide his affairs with discretion.

**Proverbs 18:9** He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster.

**Proverbs 21:17** He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man: he that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich.

**Proverbs 21:20** There is treasure to be desired and oil in the dwelling of the wise; but a foolish man spendeth it up.

**Proverbs 31:10** Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.

**11** The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil.

**12** She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.

**13** She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands.

**16** She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.

**John 6:11** And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would.

**12** When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.

**13** Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten.

**MEMORY VERSE:** That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed. —**Titus 2:4-5**

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** A discreet, virtuous woman and a prudent man guide their financial affairs with wisdom, being frugal, mindful of future needs, industrious, self-disciplined, and thoughtful of others.

## WORD DEFINITIONS

Psalms 112:5 “He will guide his affairs”: “literally to hold, contain; to hold up, or sustain; to nourish, to furnish the means of living” (*Barnes’ Notes on the Bible*). “With discretion”: with judgment; “prudently, sensibly, economically and wisely” (*Barnes’*).

Proverbs 18:9 “Waster”: destroyer; one who causes destruction.

Proverbs 21:20 “A foolish man”: one given to luxury and extravagance.

Proverbs 31:11 “No need of spoil”: no lack of gain. “She will improve and not waste his estate” (*Benson Commentary*).

John 6:12 “Fragments”: broken pieces; unused portions.

Titus 2:4 “Sober”: from a word meaning *truly moderate*; living in a Divine balance.

Titus 2:5 “Discreet”: safe and sound inner outlook which regulates outward behavior (*HELPS Word Studies*). The word refers to the diaphragm, an inner organ which regulates breathing, heartbeat and the tones of a singer. Sensible, sound, temperate. *Sober* and *discreet* are closely related words.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Rather than laying down strict rules regarding a person's frugality or wastefulness, the Bible instead teaches principles of diligence, self-control, trustworthiness, and wisdom in financial affairs. We can think again about Joseph in the matters of Egypt. He gathered the surplus from the plentiful years into storerooms and implemented a strategic way of distributing it to those who needed it. This required much preparation of the storehouses—proper ventilation, pest control, surveillance, and careful recordkeeping.

Daniel was chief over all the heads of state in Darius' realm. He was to ensure that there was no waste or loss of the king's goods. His and Joseph's examples are surely ours to follow, whether we are managing a small home of our own, a grand estate, or a corporation belonging to another.

In our scripture reading for this lesson, we again include verses about the virtuous woman. These describe how she manages the buying and selling of the goods pertaining to her home. She wisely "considers" before she spends. What an example to study and follow, even for women of our time!

The apostle Paul was thinking of this kind of wisdom and foresight as he admonished the young men and women of the early church. As noted in the Word Definitions, *sober* and *discreet* are words meaning wisdom, soundness, moderation, good sense, and self-control. All of these words have to do with the prudent management of money, whether saving or spending.

Jesus' example in the miracle of the loaves speaks volumes both as a literal example of prudence in temporal affairs and as a spiritual example of our stewardship of the miraculous spiritual bread. This little "side note" shows how Jesus cares about even the details of our lives.

—Angela Gellenbeck

### DISCUSSION:

1. What lessons can we learn from the wise man and the virtuous woman in this study?
2. What admonition is given concerning our desires and ways of using money?
3. What one word about the Proverbs 31 woman gives us guidelines about spending or buying?
4. What can we learn from Jesus' command concerning the unused pieces of bread?
5. Share what we are learning about the word "sober/discreet."

## LIFE APPLICATION

In the examples of the foolish man, which seem to point to Jesus' story of the prodigal son, his reckless spending and wasteful profligacy was solely self-directed. He never seemed to think of anything but his own desires and interests.

I notice in the examples of Joseph, Daniel, and Jesus, that the underlying reason for their forethought and wise use of "leftovers" wasn't a selfish one; rather, it had to do with genuine thoughtfulness for others, a larger sense of consideration for the well-being of the entire economy, kingdom, or group of acquaintances.

Such is the genuine interest of a wise steward. Self is entirely controlled; desires and wants are restrained with prudence, and that which is spent or saved is done with consideration of others. Again, "love is the fulfilling of the law." Jesus expressed several times to His disciples, that anyone who wished to follow Him must deny himself.

No wonder the New Testament wasn't explicit with certain laws and how-to's. Faithful stewardship depends entirely upon an individual and how he or she understands wisdom, temperance, and selflessness. As we grow in knowledge and wisdom, we learn better and better how God desires to use us as vessels of honor to glorify Him and benefit those around us.

—Angela Gellenbeck

## REFLECTIONS

Joseph and the virtuous woman, both examples given in our lesson today, have one thing in common—they were worthy of the trust others placed in them. In every position Joseph held, from being Potiphar's steward, to being caretaker of the prison and then rising to second only to Pharaoh, he was diligent and wise in his duties. The variables of how high or low the position didn't influence or affect the performance of his duties.

In the example of the virtuous woman, her husband had no care or concern because she was worthy of his trust. The list of her tasks were broad, from menial to that of great importance to his whole estate. Whether the task was great or small, "the heart of her husband doth safely trust in her" (Proverbs 31:11).

If we are trustworthy in the handling of small matters, such as our household and financial affairs, we will be accounted worthy to be entrusted with things of great and eternal value. "For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?" (1 Timothy 3:5).

—Sarah L. Herron



**FEBRUARY 27, 2022**

## **OLD TESTAMENT TITHING**

**Genesis 4:4** And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering:

**5** But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.

**Genesis 28:20** And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on,

**21** So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God:

**22** And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.

**Exodus 13:1** And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

**2** Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine.

**Exodus 34:19** All that openeth the matrix is mine; and every firstling among thy cattle, whether ox or sheep, that is male.

**20** But the firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb: and if thou redeem him not, then shalt thou break his neck. All the firstborn of thy sons thou shalt redeem. And none shall appear before me empty.

**Leviticus 27:30** And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD'S: it is holy unto the LORD.

**31** And if a man will at all redeem ought of his tithes, he shall add thereto the fifth part thereof.

**32** And concerning the tithe of the herd, or of the flock, even of whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the LORD.

**33** He shall not search whether it be good or bad, neither shall he change it: and if he change it at all, then both it and the change thereof shall be holy; it shall not be redeemed.

**Numbers 18:8** And the LORD spake unto Aaron, Behold, I also have given thee the charge of mine heave offerings of all the hallowed things of the children of Israel; unto thee have I given them by reason of the anointing, and to thy sons, by an ordinance for ever.

**12** All the best of the oil, and all the best of the wine, and of the wheat, the firstfruits of them which they shall offer unto the LORD, them have I given thee.

**21** And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation.

**25** And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

**26** Thus speak unto the Levites, and say unto them, When ye take of the children of Israel

the tithes which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then ye shall offer up an heave offering of it for the LORD, even a tenth part of the tithe.

**29** Out of all your gifts ye shall offer every heave offering of the LORD, of all the best thereof, even the hallowed part thereof out of it.

**30** Therefore thou shalt say unto them, When ye have heaved the best thereof from it, then it shall be counted unto the Levites as the increase of the threshingfloor, and as the increase of the winepress.

**31** And ye shall eat it in every place, ye and your households: for it is your reward for your service in the tabernacle of the congregation.

**Deuteronomy 16:16** Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the LORD empty:

**17** Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which he hath given thee.

**MEMORY VERSE:** 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. —**Malachi 3:10**

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** The biblical principles, “the firstlings and the fat” were the criteria for the acceptable tithes God required of His people, which they were to offer to God for the Levites (who were themselves to offer a tenth of their income offerings to God for the priests), whether it was a firstborn of their children or livestock or the firstfruits or tenth part of their produce.

## WORD DEFINITIONS

Genesis 4:4 “Firstling”: firstborn; regarded as the best and the choicest. “Fat”: the fatty portions, which were regarded as the choicest; or, as was afterward required by God in Exodus 29:13 and Leviticus 3:3.

Exodus 34:19 “Thou shalt redeem with a lamb”: all clean and unclean firstborn animals (see Numbers 18:15), such as cattle or asses (donkeys, their primary beasts of burden) were to be dedicated to the Lord; however, if they were unclean (like the donkey), they were prohibited from being used as sacrifices, so the offerer was to bring in their place a lamb. The penalty for refusing to bring a substitute lamb was that the neck of the donkey was to be broken, so that the owner could have no further profit from it. “All the firstborn of thy sons thou shalt redeem”: God prohibited them from sacrificing their children, as the heathen did,

so instead of offering a firstborn son as a burnt sacrifice, the parent was to bring redemption money as substitute. The amount established was five shekels to be given to the tabernacle, within 30 days of birth. (Numbers 18:15-16.)

Leviticus 27:30 “The tithe of the land”: a tenth of all produce from the land; set apart by commandment of the Lord. It was non-negotiable; however, a person could “buy” it back after he had offered it, by paying its value plus one-fifth of its value, to the tabernacle. “It was a yearly rent which the Israelites, as tenants, paid to God, the owner of the land, and a thank offering they rendered to Him for the bounties of His providence” (*James-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary*). A tithe was automatically considered God’s. After a person had paid what was God’s, then he could offer additional offerings as voluntary vows. But you can’t vow something that is not yours; thus the person could not offer the tithe as a vow.

Leviticus 27:32 “Whatsoever passeth under the rod”: “The tithers’ rod; it being the manner of the Jews in tithing to cause all their cattle to pass through some gate or narrow passage, where the tenth was marked by a person appointed for that purpose, and reserved for the priest.” (*Benson’s Commentary*).

Numbers 18:8 “Heave offerings”: contribution or offering for sacred uses; from a word meaning lifted off or separated. The earliest use of the word referred to the contribution of produce from the soil; it also referred to the shoulder or breast which was heaved before the Lord. “In every case of offerings made at a consecration, both the breast and the right shoulder (Leviticus 7:32) were to be given to the officiating priest, who was to ‘wave’ the one and ‘heave’ the other before the Lord. ‘Heaving’ was a single movement, an uplifting of the thing heaved; ‘waving’ was a repeated movement, a swaying of the thing waved backwards and forwards horizontally. Both were modes of presenting the thing to God” (*Ellicott’s Commentary for English Readers*).

## LESSON BACKGROUND

The Bible first records sacrifices and offerings in Genesis 4, when Cain and Abel brought offerings. For the purpose of this lesson, we will only note two important characteristics of Abel’s acceptable offering: he offered the *firstborn* of his flock, and the *best*, or *choicest*. This later became the rule for offerings under Moses’ law—the first and the best.

Genesis 14 records Abraham’s tithes given to Melchizedek, the priest of Salem. The Hebrews’ writer dedicated a whole chapter (7) to the subject, in which he showed how Melchizedek typified Christ, and noted that Abraham gave him a tenth part of the spoils of battle, the “lesser” personage honoring the “greater,” pointing forward to the Great High Priest, Jesus.

The third example of pre-Law tithing is in Genesis 28, when Jacob promised God a tenth of all he would earn on his sojourn to the East.

Exodus 12 and 13 record the establishing of the Passover, where God gave the strict commands about the type of lamb and the manner of preparation of it. It was to be a firstborn male. Exodus 34 gives further instructions about keeping the Passover and other feasts when they came into Canaan. Instruction is given on what to do when the firstborn animal was unclean, as in the case of a donkey; also given are instructions for how to redeem a firstborn son.

Leviticus 27 gives commandments concerning the firstlings and tithes; also given are distinctions about vows, sanctified things and devoted things.

Numbers 18 explains the duties of and maintenance of the High priest, the other priests, and the Levites. God reserved the heave offerings, wave offerings and firstfruits of the wine, oil and wheat for the priests and their families to eat. “The Levites were to have no territorial possessions. In place of them they were to receive from the others the tithes of the produce of the land, from which they, in their turn, offered a tithe to the priests, as a recognition of their higher consecration” (*Smith’s Bible Dictionary*). “God assigned for the habitation of the Levites forty-eight cities, with fields, pastures, and gardens (Numbers 35:1-34). Of these, thirteen were given to the priests, all in the tribes near Jerusalem. Six of the Levitical cities were appointed as cities of refuge (Joshua 20:1-9). While the Levites were actually employed in the temple, they were supported out of the provisions kept in store there, and out of the daily offerings” (*ATS Bible Dictionary*).

Deuteronomy 16 outlines the three important feasts and gives instructions for the worshippers at these feasts. Seven weeks after Passover, the Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost, came at the beginning of their harvest. They were to bring a freewill offering and rejoice in God’s blessings with a family feast. They were to do likewise at the Feast of Tabernacles, the end of the harvest, rejoicing in the way God had blessed the works of their hands. The command was given, that the worshippers should not appear before the LORD empty, and that every man “shall give as he is able.”

Our memory verse from Malachi is God’s exhortation to the priests and Levites for not having given God His tithes. Nehemiah 13 records that Tobiah, an enemy of the Jews, had conspired to have one of the priests prepare a large room and fill it with the tithes which were supposed to have been given to the Levites. Nehemiah discovered it and cleaned it out after finding that the Levites, not being supplied with proper portions, had left their singing and other work for the temple and had fled to their fields. There was a breakdown in the whole system God had established. Nehemiah summoned back the Levites, reproved the Jewish rulers for this neglect, and established new treasuries and faithful men to distribute the goods to the Levites who served the temple. Thank God for the prophets Malachi and Haggai, who spiritually led the people back to God’s law, and faithful men like Nehemiah and Ezra, who orchestrated great reforms and did the difficult, physical work of putting the service of Jehovah back into shape!

—Angela Gellenbeck

## DISCUSSION:

1. Name the three instances of pre-Law sacrifices and/or tithing mentioned in the book of Genesis.
2. What seems to be the “rule” for offerings to God?
3. What provision was given to take care of firstborn unclean animals and firstborn sons who could not be offered as burnt offerings, and what was the penalty for refusal?
4. Explain why the Levites were the recipients of the tithes, and to whom the Levites’ tithes were given.
5. Talk about the breakdown that resulted when the tithes were not there for the Levites, and how matters were resolved.

## LIFE APPLICATION

In this brief lesson, there is no way, of course, to cover all the scriptures pertaining to this very important subject. I suggest a series of studies be made to fully understand the concept of tithing, which God ordained for the maintenance of His priests and the servers of the tabernacle or temple.

That tithing was an integral part of the worship of Jehovah in those days, we can clearly see; but, as God informed them in Psalm 50:12, “If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof.” *God* wasn’t the recipient of the tithes—people, His servants, the Levites were. Yet, giving to support these laborers of the tabernacle was a *part* of worship to God.

The burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin pointed forward to and were fulfilled in Christ, who was our substitute, our Passover Lamb. The offering of grain and firstfruits at Pentecost typified the offering of the believers themselves as living sacrifices, to whom the Holy Spirit was given on the day of Pentecost. After the fall and destruction of Jerusalem, the whole system of worship and tithing came to an end, because the Jews and Levites were either destroyed, dispersed throughout the world, or absorbed into the people of the New Covenant, as believers and worshippers of Jesus. There was no temple or sacrificial ritual system to maintain. The new church began a completely new way of worship and community.

In studying the details of the old system, we again get a look at the *heart* of the issue. God designed an entire way of service with many spiritual lessons, examples and fulfillments in mind. We need to grasp the concept and find out how God implemented the same principles into His New Covenant, His church.

—Angela Gellenbeck

## REFLECTIONS

When the topic among God's people turns to tithes and offerings, I often sense that a lot of focus is placed on numbers—tithe, tenth, etc.—the result of what is given, and less focus is placed on the reason anything is given in the first place. In other words, the principle behind the tithe is often lost to the execution, or giving, of the tithe.

What stands out to me is how often God used the word "first" when describing what He required of those giving to Him. Abel seemed to understand this, so his offering was accepted. Moses told the children of Israel in Deuteronomy, "Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God is one LORD..." Not only is He a single, united Being, but He is also the supreme Being. He is first. The Greatest. Number One. There is no other besides Him. Because of Who He is, He requires our first and our best. He required the firstfruits of the land when there was no observable guarantee of the harvest to come except His promise that He would bless. Sadly, the Old Testament provides accounts where His people did not give God what He required, bringing the worst of their bounty, whether it was the maimed or sickly of their animals, or changing what God required to their own interpretations of the law as Jesus condemned during His ministry. God doesn't want us to give to Him begrudgingly, out of duty, or as an afterthought, but out of an understanding that if it wasn't for Him, we'd have nothing to give anyway!

Thankfully, I am reminded of two widows that seemed to understand the principle and purpose of giving to God. The first was the widow at Zarephath in I Kings 17, who fed Elijah first, before she and her son were to have their expected final meal, and was then blessed with continual food for her entire household the duration of the famine. The second was the widow woman who contributed two mites, which Jesus said was "all the living that she had." May we who are under the New Testament dispensation also fully understand the principles behind giving that the Kingdom of God may thrive!

—Fari Matthews

**MARCH 6, 2022**

## NEW TESTAMENT GIVING

**Matthew 5:23** Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee;

**24** Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

**Matthew 6:1** Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.

**2** Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the

hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

**3** But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth:

**4** That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.

**Matthew 10:8** Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.

**Mark 12:41** And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much.

**42** And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.

**43** And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury:

**44** For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.

**Luke 6:30** Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again.

**31** And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.

**32** For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them.

**33** And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same.

**34** And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again.

**35** But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.

**36** Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

**38** Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.

**Luke 14:14** And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

**Acts 2:44** And all that believed were together, and had all things common;

**45** And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.

**Acts 4:32** And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had

all things common.

**33** And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.

**34** Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,

**35** And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.

**Acts 20:35** I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

**Romans 12:8** Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.

**13** Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.

**I Corinthians 16:1** Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye.

**2** Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

**II Corinthians 8:11** Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have.

**12** For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.

**13** For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened:

**14** But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality:

**15** As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack.

**II Corinthians 9:7** Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Use hospitality one to another without grudging. As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. — **I Peter 4:9-11**

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** Jesus gave specific instructions as to the manner and motive of giving; the apostles and early church, in spirit and example, demonstrated benevolence toward fellow believers, merciful giving of alms for the poor, and support of gospel workers.



## WORD DEFINITIONS

Matthew 5:23 “Ought”: an indefinite pronoun; a certain one or thing; anyone; anything. “Is offended, or thinks he has been injured by you in any manner” (*Barnes’ Notes on the Bible*).

Matthew 6:2 “Do not sound a trumpet before thee”: “Do not make a public ostentatious jingle of that money which you give to public charities” (*Clarke’s Commentary*).

Matthew 6:3 “Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth”: a proverbial expression for doing a thing privately. “In these verses we are cautioned against hypocrisy in giving alms. Take heed of it. It is a subtle sin; and vain-glory creeps into what we do, before we are aware. But the duty is not the less necessary and excellent for being abused by hypocrites to serve their pride .... When we take least notice of our good deeds ourselves, God takes most notice of them. He will reward thee; not as a master who gives his servant what he earns, and no more, but as a Father who gives abundantly to his son that serves him” (*Matthew Henry*).

Mark 12:42 “Mites”: literally, thin or tiny pieces. Two of them made a farthing, or quadrant, which was one-fourth of the Roman as, which was one-tenth of a denarius, or a day’s wage. So, her two-mite offering, which was all she had made, was 1/40 of what most laborers made in a day.

Acts 2:45 and 4:35 “As he had need”: “the act of selling was the owners’, as was the act of handing the proceeds to the Apostles. The community had nothing to do with the money till it had been given to them. Further, the distribution was not determined by the rule of equality, but by the ‘need’ of the recipients; and its result was not that all had share and share alike, but that ‘none lacked’” (*MacLaren’s Expositions*).

Acts 4:32 “Of one heart and of one soul”: an expression which means *a very close and tender union*; complete accord. “They had all things common”: literally, *shared by all*. “There is nothing of modern communism in all this, but there is a lesson to the modern Church as to the obligations of wealth and the claims of brotherhood, which is all but universally disregarded. The spectre of communism is troubling every nation, and it will become more and more formidable, unless the Church learns that the only way to allay it is to live by the precepts of Jesus and to repeat in new forms the spirit of the primitive Church. The Christian sense of stewardship, not the abolition of the right of property, is the cure for the hideous facts which drive men to shriek ‘Property is theft’” (*MacLaren’s Expositions*).

Acts 20:35 “Support”: help. “The weak”: those with bodily infirmities; sick.

I Corinthians 16:2 “As God hath prospered him”: whatever he may have prospered in; whatever he succeeds in.

II Corinthians 8:14 “Abundance”: overflowing quantity. “That there may be an equality”: “That all may be just and equal. That no unjust burden should be borne by any one portion of

the great family of the redeemed. Every Christian brother should bear his due proportion" (*Barnes' Notes on the Bible*).

II Corinthians 8:15 "He that had gathered much": a quote from Exodus 16:18.

I Peter 4:9 "Hospitality": lovers of strangers. "Love is to be shown them, both negatively, by not vexing them, and making them uneasy in body or mind; by not oppressing them by violence and injustice, and making any exorbitant demands upon them; or by not perverting judgment with respect to them; and positively, by directing, counselling, and advising them, and if need be, by giving them food, and raiment, and lodging" (*Gill's*).

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Jesus' commands outline the manner of giving He required from His followers. Bringing an offering to God first required reconciliation with a brother who was offended. Humility was also a requirement. Being ostentatious with a gift was abominable to God. Another requirement was a merciful and cheerful heart. "...Freely give."

When Jesus observed the Pharisees and the widow at the offering box, He discerned the motives of each giver. He knew when a man tossed in something he didn't need anyway, but made a show of it like he had really done something great and sacrificial. He also knew that the two mites were given at great expense to the poor widow. It was not extra change to her; it was "all her living." Her gift was given in humility, true gratitude, and faith that God would supply her needs if she put Him first.

Luke recorded Jesus' instructions about dealing with needy people. The Israelites were already commanded to be free-handed with a brother. They were familiar with lending and borrowing among themselves. Jesus recommended the Heavenly Father, who gave without hope of being requited, as the supreme Example of giving, even to the unthankful and the evil.

The newly-baptized and Spirit-filled believers thought Jesus would return at any time. Their hearts were completely and unanimously given to spreading the kingdom of God and caring for one another. Many volunteered to sell property and goods and bring the proceeds to the disciples, who would distribute it to those in need. Their belief was that *all* they had belonged to God, not just ten percent.

After a time, there were so many widows being supported that the apostles felt their preaching was being hindered as they labored to fill this need. At God's direction, they chose and dedicated seven men to oversee the distribution to the poor. The apostles gave guidelines to help the men decide who should receive the funds. If a widow already had family members who were able to work and supply the home needs, the deacons were not to give aid to her. The younger widows were encouraged to marry and keep themselves at home instead of receiving free aid and living irresponsible, pleasure-filled lives. The poor men who were well enough to work were admonished to support their own loved ones.

The old system of tithing was for the maintenance and support of the temple, Levites, and priests. In the new kingdom, the emphasis was upon the support of the ministers and missionaries and relief to the poor. The congregants met first in the temple; as their numbers grew and spread to other cities, they assembled in homes or on the banks of rivers. Each person was encouraged to set apart funds, as he or she was able, according to how God was leading, for the different places or persons in need. On the first day of the week, as the believers met together, they would voluntarily bring their offerings and give them to the apostles.

—Angela Gellenbeck

## DISCUSSION:

1. Name the requirements for giving commanded by Jesus.
2. What was commended by Jesus when he observed the widow giving two mites?
3. What did Jesus promise for giving freely and without expecting earthly recompense?
4. Explain the “heart” of the early believers regarding community.
5. Explain the difference between the manner of the early church and the system of the Old Testament.

## LIFE APPLICATION

The way tithing was established was as a *rent* due to the landlord or owner, who was God. Every person was *obligated* to contribute to the maintenance of the worship system. Now that things were very different, especially after the destruction of Jerusalem, the believers were to answer to the Holy Spirit, who would direct them where to help with their money. Holy Spirit leadership was key; without that motivation, there would be breakdown.

The conviction of early believers was that they owed everything to God, *not just ten percent*. If the Spirit called for *all* my savings, it was freely given. If I got into financial need, my brethren, following the Holy Spirit, would then supply that need. The “equality” spoken of in II Corinthians didn’t mean that a common fund was set up and distributed to all equally, with all sharing the same financial status. No, the scriptures still speak of “rich” brethren (I Timothy 6:17-19) who were commanded to be willing to share. Equality meant that I shared with you today, but you would share with me when I fell into need next week.

Ten percent is a good beginning. It’s a healthy start. It’s not a hard rule commanded by the New Testament; however, that doesn’t mean we are free from the obligation to help others. *All* our means are to be dedicated to the Lord. *All* that we have is held loosely and kept ready to share.

Consecration. Obeying the Spirit. Purpose. Humility. Reconciliation of offenses. Awareness

of the needs of others. Readiness to show mercy. Cheerful giving. These describe the *heart* of New Testament giving.

—Angela Gellenbeck

## REFLECTIONS

The little boy walked into the barber shop and climbed up in the barber's chair for his haircut. The barber noticed that the arms of the little boy bore scars and burn marks that witnessed the abuse he had already endured in his young life. The barber was touched and after cutting the little boy's hair, he rewarded him with a couple of pieces of bubble gum. The little boy promptly hopped down from the barber's chair and walked over to another child in the barber shop and gave him a piece of his bubble gum. The barber was touched with this demonstration of generosity by an abused child.

Jesus noticed the widow's mite that was given and pointed the action out to the disciples. I believe the widow had no intention of drawing attention to herself but was glad to do her part. She had confidence in knowing that the Lord would supply all of her needs. And I believe that she gave with a cheerful heart. She was happy to give to the Lord. But the question today still is: why do those who have so little give so much and those who have so much give so little?

—LaDawna Adams

**MARCH 13, 2022**

## WARNINGS AGAINST COVETOUSNESS

**Exodus 20:17** Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

**Proverbs 28:16b** But he that hateth covetousness shall prolong his days. (Also **Exodus 18:21.**)

**Ezekiel 33:31** And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. (Also **Isaiah 29:13** and **Jeremiah 6:13.**)

**Mark 7:21** For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,

**22** Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness:

**23** All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

**Mark 10:24b** But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!

**25** It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

**26** And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved?

**27** And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.

**Luke 12:15** And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

**16** And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:

**17** And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?

**18** And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

**19** And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

**20** But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

**21** So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

**Colossians 3:5** Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

**6** For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience.

**I Timothy 6:9** But 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. (Also **II Timothy 3:2.**)

**10** 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. (Also **II Peter 2:14.**)

**Titus 1:7** For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre. (Also **I Timothy 3:3, 8** and **I Peter 5:2.**)

**Hebrews 13:5** Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

**MEMORY VERSE:** But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints. —**Ephesians 5:3**

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** The Lord abhors covetousness and is grieved when His people are ensnared by it, because it turns their hearts away from Him and to idolatry, ingratitude, miserliness, dishonesty, materialism, and deception.

## WORD DEFINITIONS

Proverbs 28:16 and Exodus 18:21 “Hateth”: detest; regard as an enemy; “Covetousness”: gain made by violence; unjust or ill-gotten gain; dishonest profit.

Mark 7:22 “Covetousness”: desire for advantage; “lusting for a greater number of temporal things that go beyond what God determines is eternally best (beyond His preferred-will)” (*HELPS Word Studies*).

Mark 7:23 “Defile”: make common or unclean; pollute; desecrate.

Mark 10:25 “A camel”: a proverbial expression for an impossibility, common in most countries, where other large animals such as elephants were also used in the proverb.

Luke 12:15 “Beware of covetousness”: beware of every kind of covetousness. “A man’s life”: his true life.

Luke 12:20 “Thou fool”: supreme folly; senselessness.

I Timothy 6:9 “They that will be rich”: longingly plan to be rich. “Destruction”: the wreck and ruin of the body. “Perdition”: the awful ruin of the eternal soul.

I Timothy 6:10 “The love of money”: avarice; the love of money already gained and an active grasping for more. “The root of all evil”: all kinds of evil.

Ephesians 5:3 “Covetousness”: insatiable desire; all kinds of self-seeking. “Paul....considered it as an odious and abominable vice; a vice to be regarded in the same light as the most gross sin, and as wholly to be abhorred by all who bore the Christian name. The covetous man, according to Paul, is to be ranked with the sensual, and with idolaters (Ephesians 5:5), and with those who are entirely excluded from the kingdom of God” (*Barnes’ Notes on the Bible*). “As becometh saints”: as befits Christians, or holy ones—holy in body, mind and words.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

The law forbidding covetousness is the tenth commandment of the Decalogue. Its range not only covers the desire for money, but unlawful desires for other things as well. So many of the requirements of the ceremonial and civil law had to do with regulating a person’s desires and teaching honor and respect to others, so as to keep people from committing unlawful acts against one another.

The judges who were to help Moses decide matters of law (Exodus 18:21) were to be men who “hated covetousness”; for to be absolutely fair to all sides of a matter, they had to reject

bribes. This attitude of hating covetousness was also accompanied by the promise of longer life in Proverbs 28:16; this makes sense when you consider the anxious care, extra labor, frustration, and compromised morality so common to those who had an “insatiable desire” for gain.

Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel all addressed the prevalent problem of covetousness among God’s people. It had spread from prophet to priest; from those considered “least” to those who were esteemed “great.” People would come to hear the prophet and profess to listen, but their hearts were totally consumed with their plans for gaining wealth. Jesus quoted from the prophet Isaiah when He chastised the Pharisees for covetously desiring the money that was supposed to be used for the care of elderly parents (Matthew 15:1-9). Jesus also took advantage of a teaching moment when the Pharisees scolded Him for eating without washing His hands. Covetousness was in the list of things that really defiled a person, and not dirty hands, He informed them.

The passage from Mark is from the story of the young ruler who came to Jesus with the question about eternal life. Jesus used a familiar proverb to illustrate the near-impossible chance of someone who trusted in his wealth making it to heaven. Only God could make that happen, and then only if a person humbled himself to God’s ways. Next, Jesus took the opportunity to warn about this very widespread evil by telling about a rich man He knew. Consider the omniscience of our Lord in this story. He knew the person’s thoughts; He knew God’s thoughts. He knew the motives of the man and the opportunities he obviously had to do good with his wealth. When he instead decided to use his extra finances to better himself and relax in luxury and ease, his doom was sealed at that point. There was an important thing he had missed—using his money to ensure eternal riches.

The apostle Paul, warning the Colossians about the dangerous Nicolaitaine (cheap grace) doctrine, showed those who had chosen to believe and follow Christ and were baptized as part of that testimony, how to positively and strategically meet the temptations to their flesh—by purposefully seeking the heavenly treasures! He plainly told them, “Covetousness is IDOLATRY!” Paul also warned Timothy about the dangers associated with covetousness.

Have you thought about wealth being something that would drown you? Not only that, but it is accompanied by foolish, hurtful, and sorrowful things that destroy body and soul. Paul especially warned ministers about the destructive evil. Both Timothy and Titus were to pass on the sober warning to the applicants for ordination; Peter joined in by calling worldly wealth “filthy,” and saying that a minister should not serve with the motive of getting rich. Our memory verse emphasizes that covetousness is so wicked, it should never—not even once—be named among the people who have been called to holiness.

—Angela Gellenbeck

## DISCUSSION:

1. Why was it necessary for a judge to hate covetousness?
2. What two emphatic statements did Jesus make about trusting in riches and having an abundance of things?
3. Paul especially warned \_\_\_\_\_ about covetousness.
4. Paul stated that the real name of covetousness was \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Give a definition of the word that is the root-source of all kinds of evil.

## LIFE APPLICATION

Years ago, a man from India told a story about covetousness. It has always stayed with me, and I am reminded of it when I read Paul's admonition to Timothy.

A man went to visit his friend and there admired a huge bear rug on his living room floor. The more he admired it, the more intensely he wanted that rug, until he became willing to rob his friend so he could have it for himself. He waited for a chance to catch his friend off-guard, and late at night, while his friend was sleeping deeply, he stealthily took the rug and slipped outside. It was cold and windy and beginning to rain, so he rolled the fur around himself and started for home. Reaching the river, he found the bridge out and the water rising. Frantic, he waded in and attempted to cross the powerful current, but the rug, weighted by the water, caused him to sink. Instead of being a source of satisfaction and joy, the beautiful fur became a prison, trapping him under the water and dragging him along in the torrent. Now he fought to break loose from the very thing he had wanted so badly. His blind struggle was no match for its crushing weight, and he soon perished in its awful grip.

—Angela Gellenbeck

## REFLECTIONS

"He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house; but he that hateth gifts shall live" (Proverbs 15:27).

"He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity. When goods increase, they are increased that eat them: and what good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes?" (Ecclesiastes 5:10-11)

Jesus instructed us not to lay up for ourselves treasures on the earth, where moth and rust corrupts, and thieves break through and steal, but to lay up treasures in Heaven (Matthew 6:19-21). Paul exhorted the Colossians to "seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God," and to, "Set your affection on things above, not on things on



the earth.” (Colossians 3:1-2). He also told the Corinthians, “...the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (II Corinthians 4:18).

How sad that most of the earth’s population chooses to set their eyes and their affection on things that are seen and that have no eternal value. But there is a pearl of great price that all should seek. When found, it brings complete satisfaction and an unlimited resource of everlasting wealth (Matthew 13:45-46). Think about the words of the following song, titled “My Treasures”:

“I have a treasure in my heart, more precious far than gold;  
The priceless pearl is mine today; my wealth cannot be told.

“I draw rich treasures day by day from Heaven’s bank above,  
For all my needs a full supply of joy and grace and love.

“Talk not of bank-notes, silver, gold—I need but few of such;  
I’ve riches greater far than these—Earth cannot tell how much.

“With treasures here, and treasures there, increasing day by day,  
I go rejoicing all the time upon my pilgrim way.

“I’m richer than any millionaire, a thousand times and more,  
A wondrous treasure I have found, an everlasting store.”

—C. W. Naylor, Truth in Song #83,  
published by the Gospel Trumpet Company, 1907  
—Harlan Sorrell

**MARCH 20, 2022**

### **THE FOLLY, INSTABILITY, AND DECEITFULNESS OF EARTHLY WEALTH**

**Psalm 49:6** They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches;

**7** None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him:

**Psalm 62:10** Trust not in oppression, and become not vain in robbery: if riches increase, set not your heart upon them.

(Also **Psalm 52:7**.)

**Proverbs 23:4** Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom. (Also **Jeremiah 9:23**-

24.)

**5** Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven.

**Matthew 4:8** Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;

**9** And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.

**10** Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

**Matthew 6:19** Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

**20** But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

**21** For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

**Matthew 13:22** He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. (Also **Luke 8:14.**)

**James 5:1** Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you.

**2** Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth eaten.

**3** Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.

**4** Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.

**5** Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter.

**6** Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever. —**I John 2:15-17**

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** The instability, temporary satisfaction, and false security of material wealth make it a poor substitute for the true riches promised by Christ to those who trust in Him.

## WORD DEFINITIONS

Psalm 49:6 “Boast themselves”: “Pride themselves; or feel conscious of safety and strength because they are rich” (*Barnes’ Notes on the Bible*).

Matthew 13:22 “Deceitfulness”: guile or treachery meant to cheat or lead into error. Riches “kiss and betray, they smile and smite into hell. They put out the eyes, harden the heart, steal away all the life of God, fill the soul with pride, anger, and love to the world, and make men enemies to self-denial and the whole cross of Christ” (*Wesley*). “Riches”: abundance; possessions of many kinds.

James 5:1 “Go to now”: come now; a phrase for calling to attention.

James 5:2 “Your riches are corrupted”: “The word here rendered “corrupted” (σῆπω sēpō) does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. It means to cause to rot, to corrupt, to destroy. The reference here is to their hoarded treasures; and the idea is, that they had accumulated more than they needed for their own use; and that, instead of distributing them to do good to others, or employing them in any useful way, they kept them until they rotted or spoiled.

I John 2:16 “Lust of the flesh”: desire for that which pampers the appetites. “Wrong desires of the heart, the appetite of indulging all things that excite and inflame sensual pleasures” (*Matthew Henry*). Satan tried this temptation on Christ when he told Him to turn the stones into bread. “Lust of the eyes”: the lust of covetousness after things that delight the eyes, such as riches and possessions. “That which is designed merely to gratify the sight. This would include, of course, costly clothes, jewels, gorgeous furniture, splendid palaces, pleasure-grounds, etc” (*Barnes’ Notes on the Bible*). The desire for beauty, when it becomes “the great and leading object of life—when it is sought without any connection with religion or reference to the world to come” (*Barnes’*). Satan tempted Jesus with this kind of lust, when he showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and the beauty of them in a moment of time. “Pride of life”: ambition; the desire for honor, title, knowledge above what God wants us to know; the boasting about the things one possesses; pretentious ostentation; vainglorious display. Satan attempted to snare Jesus with vainglory by suggesting that he jump off the pinnacle of the temple to show how the angels would rescue him.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Psalm 49 is “a meditation on the vanity of riches, and the usual haughtiness of those who possess them. As a remedy for this, he sets before them the near prospect of death, from which no riches can save, in which no riches can avail” (Dr. Dodd in *Clarke’s Commentary*). The psalm both instructs and comforts, calling the inhabitants of the world—of this life—to consider the folly of trusting in wealth and the true security found in trusting God.

Psalm 62, written by David in a time of distress, possibly during the rebellion of Absalom, was sent to one of the chief musicians, Jeduthun, who, with his six sons, prophesied and served in the tabernacle with vocal and instrumental music. The emphasis of the psalm is waiting on God, and verses eight through eleven focus on trust in God and not in vain riches.

Psalm 52 was written by David as a judgment against Doeg, Saul's servant who betrayed and murdered the priests. He pointed out the folly of trusting in one's wealth, status, and power.

Proverbs 23:4 and Jeremiah 9:23 both admonish rich and wise people to trust in God and not themselves.

Matthew 4:8 describes the temptation of Christ to the honor and glory and wealth of this world's kingdoms. Satan falsely promised to give them to Jesus if He would fall down and worship him. This passage points out the idolatry characteristic in loving and pursuing wealth; giving in to this temptation definitely involves bowing down to satan and owning him as Lord.

In Matthew 6, Jesus instructs His followers to not accumulate worldly possessions or hold them closely as dear treasures, but to lay up treasures in heaven, where they are secure from corruption and decay. After Jesus ended His discussion, I wonder how many people came to Him and asked, "Master, how can I lay up treasures in heaven?" Wouldn't you like to hear Jesus' response?

The passage from Matthew 13 is part of the parable of the sower, also recorded in Mark 4 and Luke 8. "The deceitfulness of riches" is described as a noxious thorn which grows up along with the Word of God in a person's life. If care is not taken to eradicate it, this thorn can totally choke the life of God in the soul, and render it fruitless.

James 5:1-6 is a cry of judgment against wealthy men who had oppressed others, especially their employees, in their pursuit of riches.

John taught that loving wealth, pleasure, possessions, and honor keeps the soul from loving God, and whoever loves these things is sure to be disappointed, because they are so temporary. Eternal life and bliss surely comes from loving God, not riches.

The central theme of these scriptures is the fragility and vanity of earthly wealth, which deceives people into thinking they are happy and secure. It is a false security, because as the metaphor from Proverbs so aptly states, riches do seem to grow wings and fly away. Our security is in the One who said, "I will never leave thee."

—Angela Gellenbeck

## **DISCUSSION:**

1. What can a wealthy man NOT do for his brother with his riches?
2. What word picture from Proverbs describes the fleeting quality of wealth?
3. What is involved with seeking earthly wealth which Jesus refused to do? What was His

reason?

4. What can choke the life of God right out of the soul?
5. I can find eight specific commands in the scripture selections of our lesson which involve riches: where are they?

### **LIFE APPLICATION**

The sober commands and admonitions found in these passages should make us fall on our knees before God and beg for His guidance as we navigate the swift-flowing currents of modern society. We have been a prosperous nation for many years. Any person who would apply himself or herself and work hard, be diligent, and plan prudently can acquire not only a comfortable situation financially, but also great wealth. We should remember the One who gives us that ability: God alone. At any time, that ability to acquire worldly goods could be wiped away.

This lesson is a warning to not trust in uncertain riches, but in God; to remember that the security promised by wealth is only a sham. The real power of wealth is its power to choke God's Word, deceive us, cause us to worship satan, and separate us from the Father. Wealth cannot redeem, save a man from death, or give him happiness, hope, and a future.

—Angela Gellenbeck

### **REFLECTIONS**

The historic stock market crash of 1929 caused a great panic among investors. Many lost everything in just a few minutes of trading. Stories of big investors taking their lives abounded and, sadly, some of these stories were true. Studies since then suggest that suicide rates increase in the year of a stock market crash and the year following. It is a tragic illustration of those who put their trust in “uncertain riches” and have not laid up “treasure in heaven.”

I once had the privilege of attending the funeral of a dear saint that had little of this world's goods. She'd had just enough to care for herself to her dying day. Her children shared the most precious stories of their mother. I had not personally known her well, but her eulogy left a deep impression on me. This is an example of real wealth. She was rich in faith and good works. Her children and grandchildren didn't have a big inheritance to divide or squabble over. What they received was of much greater value, a godly heritage.

—Sarah L. Herron

**MARCH 27, 2022**

## **HOW THEN SHALL WE LIVE?**

**Proverbs 11:24** There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty.

**25** The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.

**Proverbs 19:17** He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.

**Philippians 4:11** Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

**12** I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

**13** I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

**Colossians 3:1** If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

**2** Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

**I John 3:16** Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

**17** But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? (Also **James 2:15-16.**)

**18** My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

**I Timothy 6:17** Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;

**18** That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;

**19** Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness. —**Psalms 119:36**

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** True compassion for the needy, true affection for God's Word and heavenly joys, and true liberality of the material goods God has entrusted to our care cause us to be faithful stewards who lay up true riches in God's heavenly kingdom.

## WORD DEFINITIONS

Proverbs 11:24 “There is that scattereth”: disperse; give liberally.

Proverbs 11:25 “Liberal soul”: the *soul of blessing*. The one who blesses others by giving liberally.

I Timothy 6:17 “Highminded”: “exalt themselves haughtily over others because of their possessions” (*Meyers’ NT Commentary*).

I Timothy 6:18 “That they do good”: “The wish to be rich was a sure root of error and of evil, but the being rich was a very different thing; this class was surrounded, indeed, with special perils, but still, even ‘as rich’ they might serve God faithfully. So in his charge to them he commands them not to strip themselves of their wealth, but to use it wisely, generously” (*Ellicott’s Commentary for English Readers*). “Ready to distribute”: generous; good at imparting. “Willing to communicate”: ready to share.

## DISCUSSION:

1. Talk about what it means to “withhold more than is meet.”
2. When we lend to the poor, who is ultimately the recipient of our gift?
3. Where is the safest place to put our affections?
4. How do we prove that we love God, give blessings to Him, and lay up treasures in heaven?
5. What prayer should we pray as we consider these lessons?

## LIFE APPLICATION

Proverbs 19:17 reminds us of what Jesus said in Matthew 25, that when we help, visit, or feed the needy, we are really doing it for Jesus. Proverbs 11:24-25 speaks to us about what happens when we open our hands wide to our brother, and what happens when we withhold “more than is meet” or fitting. Yes, there are times when contributing funds is really aiding and abetting someone’s drug or alcohol addiction, or enabling someone to continue in a path of self-destruction. That is when it is fitting to withhold. God forbid that we would be tight-fisted in the face of actual poverty, when we have the ability to make a difference. The passage from I John asks us, “How dwelleth the love of God” in a person who will not be generous with others? Additionally, we can know that there are times where it is “meet” to lay aside finances for a certain use, or for an inheritance for our children (II Corinthians 12:14).

Another admonition to those who are rich *or* poor is that their hearts should be set on heavenly, not earthly things. We can be set to gain much literal wealth, or we can set our love on the Lord. That’s a choice we make every day. Let us learn, like Paul, “how to be abased” and “how to abound.”

Still another warning is, “Don’t be high-minded” if you have wealth. Don’t look down on others; or consider yourself in a class above; or think that you are a better person. That is another one of the ways riches are deceitful: they make you feel a false superiority. Conversely, if God has not seen fit to prosper you with literal excess, and it is difficult to make ends meet, don’t feel that you are “less than.” Trust in God, who will not fail you, and rejoice in the heavenly treasures and promises of His care.

Also, we are not to trust in our stash of extra money, because it can be gone in an instant; but our trust should be in God, “who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.” The wise man in Ecclesiastes spoke about the tragedy of making money but not enjoying the fruit of one’s labor. God’s gifts are to be enjoyed. There are those who scrimp and save, clear up into old age; never doing pleasant things with the children, never quite able to contribute to the truly needy. This is folly and tragedy. God’s will would be that, with moderation and self-control, we would give our children happy memories and live with hearts aware of the many opportunities to share with others in need.

Although we have not really addressed the subject of financial debt in this study, let me add a word of warning. A concept from Proverbs 22:7, “The borrower is servant to the lender,” along with the promise to the Israelites who would keep God’s laws, that they would be financially blessed to always be lenders, and not borrowers (Deuteronomy 15:6), gives us the understanding that being under a load of debt is a bondage that God never intended for His people. We should strive then, not to allow intemperate desires to bring us under the great bondage of debt. If situations in life make it necessary for us to borrow money, let us live temperate, honest lifestyles which will enable us to pay off those obligations as soon as possible, being faithful to pay each payment on time. Lack of diligence and responsibility that results in being unfaithful on monthly payments is a reproach upon our personal testimony of salvation and upon the church as a whole.

The prayer from Psalm 119 is the capstone of our study: “Lord, incline my heart to Your testimonies, and not to covetousness.” May we set our love on the Lord and be a willing vessel of His grace and mercy to others; may we be faithful stewards of His lavish gifts.

—Angela Gellenbeck

## REFLECTIONS

*Learning to be Content:* I remember many days—days that turned into months—months that turned into years, walking my neighborhood streets longing for a home that we could call our own. During that season of life, the Lord taught me to be content with our little apartment and with what He had given to us. And truly, love, life-lessons, memories, family and friends filled the walls of that little place.

*God Allows us to Walk Through the Fire:* In time, God saw fit to give us a house for our



growing family. An answer to our prayers! But. A few short years after moving into that house, the market became depressed and many, many months passed where “our” house was in jeopardy. If it had not been for the generosity of those who knew we had need, we might not have even had money for food for a period of time. Many uncertain days were contained in that season of our lives. God called us to put the very “thing” on the altar which He had given us to start with.

*Truths Learned:* But you know what? God was true to His promises. We DID make it. He took care of us. He comforted us. He helped us to rely on Him more as we learned how to walk through a hungry season. Most importantly, however, was the truth that one needs to hold very lightly to the things of this world. Nothing is sure. Not health. Not finances. Not circumstances. Nothing but God Himself and the investments we make in things that hold eternal value and worth.

—Submitted by one Whose Faith Was Increased











