

## Lesson 8

### Planning for Success

#### Sabbath Afternoon, February 18

It is a very poor policy for men to seek to improve on God's plan and invent a makeshift, averaging up their good impulses in this and that instance and offsetting them against all that is required by God. We are to strike true and faithful figures in tithing, and then say to the Lord, I have done as Thou hast commanded me. If Thou wilt honor me by trusting me with Thy goods to trade upon, I will, by Thy grace, be a faithful steward, doing all in my power to bring meat to Thy house.

Men who have large responsibilities are to be sure that they are not robbing God in any jots or tittles, when so much is involved, as is so plainly stated in Malachi. Here we are told that a blessing is given for a faithful disposition of the tithes, and a curse for the covetous retention of the money which should flow into the treasury. Then ought we not to be sure to work on the safe side, so dealing with God in handling the property lent us on trust that no shadow of reproach shall fall upon us? I need not ask, Will not God bless those who are faithful? We have His pledged word.—That I May Know Him, p. 221.

Christ, in His mediatorial capacity, gives to His servants the presence of the Holy Spirit. It is the efficiency of the Spirit that enables human agencies to be representatives of the Redeemer in the work of soul saving. That we may unite with Christ in this work we should place ourselves under the molding influence of His Spirit. Through the power thus imparted we may co-operate with the Lord in the bonds of unity as laborers together with Him in the salvation of souls. To everyone who offers himself to the Lord for service, withholding nothing, is given power for the attainment of measureless results.

The Lord God is bound by an eternal pledge to supply power and grace to everyone who is sanctified through obedience to the truth. Christ, to whom is given all power in heaven and on earth, co-operates in sympathy with His instrumentalities—the earnest souls who day by day partake of the living bread, “which cometh down from heaven.” John 6:50. The church on earth, united with the church in heaven, can accomplish all things.—Testimonies for the Church, vol. 7, pp. 30, 31.

[O]ur business or calling is a part of God's great plan, and, so long as it is conducted in accordance with His will, He Himself is responsible for the results. “Laborers together with God” (1 Corinthians 3:9), our part is faithful compliance with His directions. Thus there is no place for anxious care. Diligence, fidelity, caretaking, thrift, and discretion are called for. Every faculty is to be exercised to its highest capacity. But the dependence will be, not on the successful outcome of our efforts, but on the promise of God. The word that fed Israel in the desert, and sustained Elijah through the time of famine, has the same power today. “Be not therefore anxious (R.V.), saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? . . . Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” Matthew 6:31-33.—Education, p. 138.

## **Sunday, February 19: First Things First**

“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.” Jesus desires the service of [the youth.] He wants them to be heirs of immortality. They may grow up into noble manhood and womanhood, notwithstanding the moral pollution that abounds, that corrupts so many of the youth at an early age. They may be free in Christ; the children of light, not of darkness.

God calls upon every young man and young woman to renounce every evil habit, to be diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. . . . that . . . by the power of His Spirit, [He] will give them strength to overcome.

Individual, constant, united efforts will be rewarded by success. Those who desire to do a great deal of good in our world must be willing to do it in God’s way, by doing little things. . . .

Steady progress in a good work, the frequent repetition of one kind of faithful service, is of more value in God’s sight than the doing of one great work, and wins for the youth a good report, giving character to their efforts. —Messages to Young People, p. 369.

He who gives men power to get wealth has with the gift bound up an obligation. Of all that we acquire He claims a specified portion. The tithe is the Lord’s. “All the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree,” “the tithe of the herd, or of the flock, . . . shall be holy unto the Lord.” Leviticus 27:30, 32. The pledge made by Jacob at Bethel shows the extent of the obligation. “Of all that Thou shalt give me,” he said, “I will surely give the tenth unto Thee.” Genesis 28:22.

“Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse” (Malachi 3:10), is God’s command. No appeal is made to gratitude or to generosity. This is a matter of simple honesty. The tithe is the Lord’s; and He bids us return to Him that which is His own.

“It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.” 1 Corinthians 4:2. If honesty is an essential principle of business life, must we not recognize our obligation to God—the obligation that underlies every other? —Education, pp. 138, 139.

God made from the man a woman, to be a companion and helpmeet for him, to be one with him, to cheer, encourage, and bless him, he in his turn to be her strong helper. All who enter into matrimonial relations with a holy purpose—the husband to obtain the pure affections of a woman’s heart, the wife to soften and improve her husband’s character and give it completeness—fulfill God’s purpose for them.—The Adventist Home, p. 99.

In the marriage relation there is a very important step taken—the blending of two lives into one. It is in accord with the will of God that man and wife should be linked together in His work, to carry it forward in a wholeness and a holiness. They can do this.

The blessing of God in the home where this union shall exist is as the sunshine of heaven, because it is the Lord’s ordained will that man and wife should be linked together in holy bonds of union, under Jesus Christ, with Him to control, and His spirit to guide.—The Adventist Home, pp. 101, 102.

## **Monday, February 20: The Blessing of Work (Ideally)**

He who taught Adam and Eve in Eden how to tend the garden, desires to instruct men today. There is wisdom for him who drives the plow and sows the seed. Before those who trust and obey Him, God will open ways of advance. Let them move forward courageously, trusting in Him to supply their needs according to the riches of His goodness.

He who fed the multitude with five loaves and two small fishes is able today to give us the fruit of our labor. He who said to the fishers of Galilee, "Let down your nets for a draft," and who, as they obeyed, filled their nets till they broke, desires His people to see in this an evidence of what He will do for them today. The God who in the wilderness gave the children of Israel manna from heaven still lives and reigns. He will guide His people and give skill and understanding in the work they are called to do. He will give wisdom to those who strive to do their duty conscientiously and intelligently. He who owns the world is rich in resources, and will bless everyone who is seeking to bless others.

We need to look heavenward in faith. We are not to be discouraged because of apparent failure, nor should we be disheartened by delay. We should work cheerfully, hopefully, gratefully, believing that the earth holds in her bosom rich treasures for the faithful worker to garner, stores richer than gold or silver. The mountains and hills are changing; the earth is waxing old like a garment; but the blessing of God, which spreads for His people a table in the wilderness, will never cease.—The Ministry of Healing, p. 200.

In the beginning the Lord enjoined upon man the cultivation of the earth. This work was made much harder because of the transgression of the law of God. By transgressing, man worked against his own present and eternal good. The earth was cursed because through disobedience man gave Satan opportunity to sow in the human heart the seeds of evil. The ground that in the beginning produced only good began to produce tares, and their growth called for continual warfare.—This Day With God, p. 12.

The name "servant" applies to every man; for we are all servants, and it will be well for us to see what mold we are taking on. Is it the mold of unfaithfulness, or of fidelity?

Is it the disposition generally among servants to do as much as possible? Is it not rather the prevalent fashion to slide through the work as quickly, as easily, as possible, and obtain the wages at as little cost to themselves as they can? The object is not to be as thorough as possible but to get the remuneration. Those who profess to be the servants of Christ should not forget the injunction of the apostle Paul, "Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: and whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ."—Messages to Young People, p. 229.

## **Tuesday, February 21: The Earning Years**

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

“Wealth gotten in haste shall be diminished: but he that gathereth by labor shall have increase.” Proverbs 13:11, R.V. . . .

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

The psalmist’s words, “The law of Thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver” (Psalm 119:72), state that which is true from other than a religious point of view. They state an absolute truth and one that is recognized in the business world. Even in this age of passion for money getting, when competition is so sharp and methods are so unscrupulous, it is still widely acknowledged that, for a young man starting in life, integrity, diligence, temperance, purity, and thrift constitute a better capital than any amount of mere money. —Education, pp. 136, 137.

By His own example [Jesus] taught that it is our duty to be industrious, that our work should be performed with exactness and thoroughness, and that such labor is honorable. The exercise that teaches the hands to be useful and trains the young to bear their share of life’s burdens gives physical strength, and develops every faculty. All should find something to do that will be beneficial to themselves and helpful to others. God appointed work as a blessing, and only the diligent worker finds the true glory and joy of life. The approval of God rests with loving assurance upon children and youth who cheerfully take their part in the duties of the household, sharing the burdens of father and mother. Such children will go out from the home to be useful members of society.

Throughout His life on earth, Jesus was an earnest and constant worker. He expected much; therefore He attempted much. . . . Jesus did not shirk care and responsibility. . . . The positiveness and energy, the solidity and strength of character, manifested in Christ are to be developed in us, through the same discipline that He endured. And the grace that He received is for us.—The Desire of Ages, pp. 72, 73.

There is science in the humblest kind of work, and if all would thus regard it, they would see nobility in labor. Heart and soul are to be put into work of any kind; then there is cheerfulness and efficiency. In agricultural or mechanical occupations, men may give evidence to God that they appreciate His gift in the physical powers, and the mental faculties as well. Let the educated ability be employed devising improved methods of work. This is just what the Lord wants. There is honor in any class of work that is essential to be done. Let the law of God be made the standard of action and it ennobles and sanctifies all labor. Faithfulness in the discharge of every duty makes the work noble, and reveals a character that God can approve.—Ellen G. White Comments, in The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 5, p. 1112.

### **Wednesday, February 22: Working With Integrity**

That which lies at the foundation of business integrity and of true success is the recognition of God's ownership. The Creator of all things, He is the original proprietor. We are His stewards. All that we have is a trust from Him, to be used according to His direction.

This is an obligation that rests upon every human being. It has to do with the whole sphere of human activity. Whether we recognize it or not, we are stewards, supplied from God with talents and facilities, and placed in the world to do a work appointed by Him.

To every man is given "his work" (Mark 13:34), the work for which his capabilities adapt him, the work which will result in greatest good to himself and to his fellow men, and in greatest honor to God.—Education, pp. 137, 138.

Strength of character consists of two things—power of will and power of self-control. Many youth mistake strong, uncontrolled passion for strength of character; but the truth is that he who is mastered by his passions is a weak man. The real greatness and nobility of the man is measured by the power of the feelings that he subdues, not by the power of the feelings that subdue him. The strongest man is he, who, while sensitive to abuse, will yet restrain passion and forgive his enemies. Such men are true heroes. . . .

God has given us our intellectual and moral powers, but to a great extent every person is the architect of his own character. Every day the structure is going up. The word of God warns us to take heed how we build, to see that our building is founded upon the eternal Rock. The time is coming when our work will stand revealed just as it is. Now is the time for all to cultivate the powers which God has given them, that they may form characters for usefulness here and for a higher life hereafter.—Testimonies for the Church, vol. 4, p. 656.

"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Here is a principle which lies at the foundation of every act, thought, and motive; the consecration of the entire being, both physical and mental, to the control of the Spirit of God. The unsanctified will and passions must be crucified. This may be regarded as a close and severe work. Yet it must be done, or you will hear the terrible sentence from the mouth of Jesus: "Depart." You can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth you. . . .

You need to cry earnestly: "O Lord, my inmost soul convert." You can have an influence for good over other young people. May the God of peace sanctify you wholly, soul, body, and spirit.—Lift Him Up, p. 262.

Joseph walked with God. He would not be persuaded to deviate from the path of righteousness, and transgress God's law, by any inducements or threats. And when he was imprisoned, and suffered because of his innocence, he meekly bore it without murmuring. His self-control, and patience in adversity, and his unwavering fidelity are left on record of the benefit of all who should afterward live on the earth. When Joseph's brethren acknowledged their sin before him, he freely forgave them, and showed by his acts of benevolence and love that he harbored no resentful feelings for their former cruel conduct toward him.—Spiritual Gifts, vol. 3, p. 176.

## Thursday, February 23: Seeking Godly Counsel

As the Lord sees fit, He imparts to those who keep His way, power that enables them to exert a strong influence for good. On God they are dependent, and to Him they must give an account of the way in which they use the talents He has entrusted to them. They are to realize that they are God's stewards and are to seek to magnify His name.

Those whose affections are set on God will succeed. They will lose sight of self in Christ, and worldly attractions will have no power to allure them from their allegiance. They will realize that outward display does not give strength. It is not ostentation, outward show, that gives a correct representation of the work that we, as God's chosen people, are to do. Those who are connected with our sanitarium work should be adorned with the grace of Christ. This will give them the greatest influence for good.—Testimonies for the Church, vol. 7, p. 90.

The wisest of men may learn useful lessons from the ways and habits of the little creatures of the earth. The industrious bee gives to men of intelligence an example that they would do well to imitate. These insects observe perfect order, and no idler is allowed in the hive. They execute their appointed work with an intelligence and activity that are beyond our comprehension. The ants, which we consider as only pests to be crushed under our feet, are in many respects superior to man; for he does not as wisely improve the gifts of God. The wise man calls our attention to the small things of the earth: "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest." "The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer." We may learn from these little teachers a lesson of faithfulness. Should we improve with the same diligence the faculties which an all-wise Creator has bestowed upon us, how greatly would our capacities for usefulness be increased. God's eye is upon the smallest of His creatures; does He not, then, regard man formed in His image and require of him corresponding returns for all the advantages He has given him?—Testimonies for the Church, vol. 4, p. 455.

Jesus has been delivering His goods to His servants age after age. One generation after another has been gathering up the hereditary trust; the talents have increased largely by use, and have descended to us. We are as His hired servants. He has brought us, paid the ransom money in His own blood to secure our willing service. . . .

All He asks . . . is just to use the talents entrusted. If you think that God has given you five talents, then be consoled that He does not require of you the improvement of ten. In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, I bid you look up! The rainbow of promise is encircling the throne.—The Upward Look, p. 343.

**Friday, February 24: For Further Reading**

*In Heavenly Places*, "The Gold of Christian Character," p. 173;

*My Life Today*, "He Multiplies My Talents," p. 113.