



SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTIST
CHURCH

South Caribbean Conference

27th November 2018

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Dear Fellow Stewards:

Christian greetings to you.

I give thanks to God continually for you. I asked God to bless you as His faithful Stewards and as disciplined Stewardship educators. We have come to appreciate that Stewardship is the management of the total life. (Time Talent Temple Truth Terrain and Treasure) There is nothing that we have, or have become, that is outside the sphere of our stewardship responsibility to God.

I write to inform you that it is Stewardship Emphasis Week 2018 from 1st -8th December. We know that the church members need timely reminders of their stewardship responsibility to God, therefore we have produced a series of 'Stewardship Sermons' for this week that we hope will meet your needs. These sermons are designed to keep the matter of Christian Stewardship before the church family. There are four sermons for the week that is intended to be presented on the days specified (Sabbath, Sunday, Wednesday and Sabbath), under the theme, '**Honouring God with the Total Life**'.

You are encouraged to present these sermons on the assigned dates as is designated on the Conference Calendar for 2018. However if it is not possible to make these presentations on the schedule dates then we encourage you to do it at the most appropriate time.

May God bless you as you use this resource to His honour and Glory.

Blessings

Teelbaney Singh

TEELBANEY SINGH (Pastor)

Director of Stewardship

DATE. SABBATH DECEMBER 1ST, 2018

TOPIC: Hounoring God With All Your Substance

SCRIPTURE READING: PROVERBS 3: 9, 10

OPENING SONG: 281

CLOSING SONG: 309



Wilfred was a very confused young man at this stage of his life. He had grown up in the church, had been through primary and secondary schools, and had gone to university and completed his Law Degree, graduating with first class honors. He started a very successful practice and things were going well for him. Five years into his professional life he began to experience the call of God to the gospel ministry.

His family and friends were not very excited about the idea of further education, or of becoming a pastor. Family responsibilities, the needs of the mission field and present work commitments were some of the issues they raised in order to register their objection. These concerns only worsen his confusion about the gospel ministry. What will he do about his conviction that God was calling him to Gospel work?

Then one day it happened. He was visiting in the city on business and decided to have lunch at one of the better restaurants around. As he sat awaiting the waitress, he became deeply absorbed in the luxurious surroundings. The ambience was nothing short of

breathhtaking, the architecture blended perfectly with the centerpiece lighting fixture. The picturesque paintings outstandingly complemented each other. There was one painting, however, that captured his attention. It was a picture of a meandering river of crystal clear water. The banks of the river were covered with lush green grass from which a variety of multi-colored wild flowers blossomed. What a masterpiece! he thought. The more important reason why he enjoyed this masterpiece was because of the caption of the painting that added the perfect dimension to this work of art, It read; “THE ONLY EVIDENCE OF LIFE IS GROWTH” That statement struck him like a bolt of lightning. It was the answer to his questioning mind about his future. Such an indelible impression was made that the young man immediately left the restaurant and made his way home, certain in his mind that God had spoken to him. He began making preparation to return to school. All the while this phrase kept ringing in his mind “**The only evidence of life is growth**” The apostle Peter challenges us to grow (2 Peter 3:18). The proper use of the word “grow” in this text teaches that believers must “continue to grow.”

Definitions of “grow”:

- “Grow” suggests that one makes advancement
- “Grow” suggests that there is constant improvement
- “Grow” suggests upward and forward mobility

Peter was ideally positioned to understand the growth process, having moved from, the seaside of Galilee, to Mount Olivet, to the Mount of Transfiguration, And in the spiritual sphere, Peter grew from a backslider, who denied his Lord, to the evangelist, who preached on the day of Pentecost, to becoming the missionary to the Jewish people, and

then to author two epistles. Peter encourages the church to continue growing in two important areas of the Christian's life: (1) **Grace**, and (2) **Knowledge**. Today's message focuses on '**GRACE**'

Definition: What is grace?

- Grace is the unearned favour of God.
- Grace is the love and goodness of God.
- Grace is the qualities and characteristics of God.

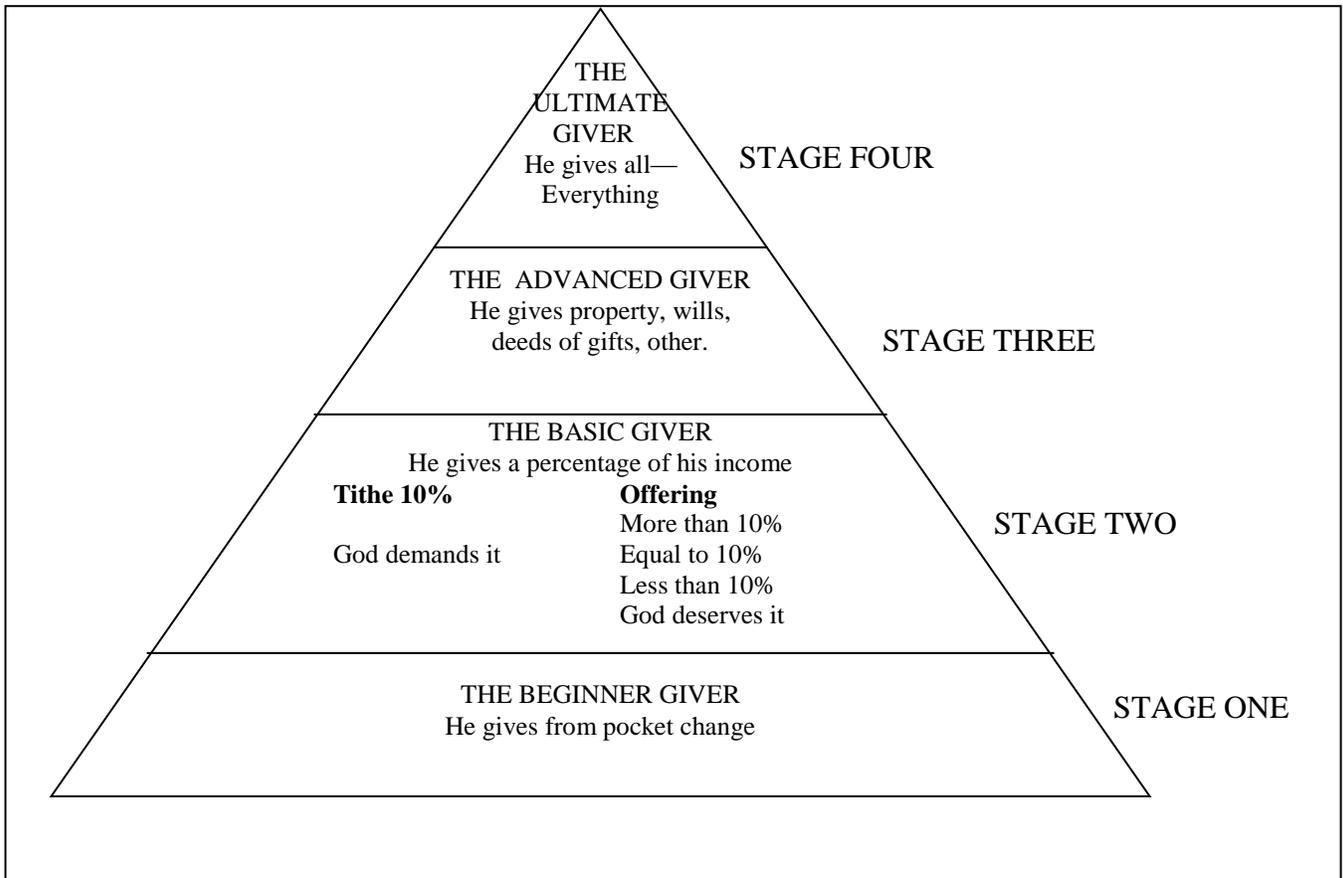
Growing in Christian grace suggest that one is growing in the character of God. Paul teaches that if we live in the spirit and walk in the spirit, the Christian believer will grow in grace and bear the fruit of the spirit which is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance (Galatians 22-25). Christians who are continually growing in grace are becoming more like Christ by the fruits that they bear Since growth has qualitative and quantitative dimensions, it therefore means that the enrichment of the character of a person is reflective of **growth**.

The apostle Peter speaks of growth as adding to one's personal development. He says in 2 Peter 1:5-7 that we must give careful attention to growth and add to faith, virtue and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance and to temperance patience and to patience, brotherly kindness and to brotherly kindness charity.

Paul also gives us a recipe for growth in grace in Philippians 4:8, where he recommends that we should saturate our minds with things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous and praise worthy to enhance the growth process.

Among the many graces which the Christian believer is invited to grow-up into, is the grace of giving. This may be found in 2 Cor. 8:7. Here Paul says: “Therefore, as ye abound in everything, in faith and utterance, and knowledge and in all diligence, and in your love to us, **see that you abound in this grace also.** Question! What is Paul referring to when he says: “ ... **see that you abound in this grace also**” This bible verse is made much clearer in the New International Version, which reads “But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us—see that you also excel in ‘**this grace of giving**’. The bible teaching, therefore, is that giving is a divine characteristic and that the Christian is called to grow as a giver.

Today, we will look at four stages in the growth process of giving



STAGE ONE: THE BEGINNER GIVER

This stage highlights the giver who has not been taught about the benefits and blessings of giving, and so sees giving as having less. The beginner giver misunderstands the call to give as a call from man and not a call from God.

This giver goes into his/her purse or wallet at offering time in search of the least valuable coin or dollar note to put into the offering plate. He gives what he choose. What is noteworthy here is that most givers start their life of giving at this stage. The Christian who is diligent to grow in the grace of giving will not stay at the beginner stage, but will continue to grow.

STAGE TWO: THE BASIC GIVER

This stage of giving is where most Christians get stuck. The basic giver is also called the percentage giver. He gives to God 10% of his increase as a tithe, and a percentage in offering in recognition of God's ownership. In celebration of God's blessing to him, there are times when the percentage of the offering will be more than the tithe, at other times it is equal to the tithe and sometimes it is less than the tithe. While the basic giver gives the tithe as determined by God, he has grown to understand that the offering is determined by a covenant relationship between the Christian and his God. This is influenced by: (1) the blessings of God upon him. (2) his love and gratitude to God and (3) the spirit of

freewill and sacrifice. Many Christians unfortunately never grow from this stage, even though there is still much room for growth in the grace of giving.

STAGE THREE: THE ADVANCED GIVER

This giver understands that it is God who gives us power to get wealth (Duet. 8:18) and, therefore, gives faithfully from his income, in tithe and offerings. He has also grown to understand that the earth is the Lord's, the silver and gold are God's and the cattle on the hills also belong to God (Ps. 24:1; Hag. 2:8; Ps. 50:10) and by extension, he understands that all his accumulated assets is rightly the property of God.

The advanced giver gives of his property to God. Sometimes *through wills*, sometimes through **deed of gifts**, sometimes by **lump-sum financial donations** and other times by **trusts**. The stage three giver is growing with the understanding that the cause of Christ sometimes needs a large injection of funds to achieve its mission and is willing to give much more to advance the kingdom. The church will be able to do much more to build the kingdom of God and advance the gospel commission if we had, among our members, many more who were advanced givers.

STAGE FOUR: THE ULTIMATE GIVER

This giver understands the grace of giving. He respects God's ownership of all things and walks in an abiding relationship with Him. The ultimate giver is growing in a deeper and richer relationship with his Creator, day by day. This person believes and claims the rich

promises of God and has learnt to depend totally on Him for everything. The ultimate giver gives all.

PERFECT EXAMPLE OF GIVING

The perfect example of ultimate giving is God. In giving the gift of His Son, God was giving all. Jesus, in giving His life, was giving everything: His glory, His power, His position, and on earth, He gave the ultimate gift of His life for the world. John 3:16 reflects the extent to which the ultimate giver will go, and more importantly, the only true motivation for Christian giving. Jesus who is our example in giving became an ultimate giver when He gave all for our salvation

Finally Wilfred made his decision to return to school. This meant selling out all his acquired assets and moving to the Seminary. As the departure date drew near Wilfred became more and more emotional. There was a tug at his heart because he really loved his home and neighborhood.

He would miss his favorite relaxing spot under the young coconut tree that stood next to an old electricity pole which was used for a home by a Red-Head Woodpecker, on the Eastern side of the house. He would fondly remember the warm rays of sunlight filtering through the leaves of the coconut tree, caressing his body, as he studied the behavior of the Woodpecker. But alas he had to leave it all behind and move on to the Seminary. Eight years would pass before he returned to visit his old neighborhood, and what a nostalgic feeling at being home again. Many things had remained the same and they

brought back fond memories. During his visit he went to his favorite spot, the coconut tree near the pole. Here he noticed a **b-i-g** difference. The old pole was standing just as he left it eight years ago. But the coconut tree had grown to twice the height of the pole and was now bearing large yellow water nuts. From this scene a very important lesson was learnt. The dead pole stood still, going nowhere, while the living coconut tree was growing and bearing.

Today I want to ask:

- Are we growing to become more like Jesus each day?
- Are we being drawn into an abiding relationship with Christ?
- Are we experiencing the joy of salvation in Christ?
- Are we growing in the grace of giving—
 - To God and His church?
 - To your home and family?
 - To the poor and needy?

Today, Jesus calls us to total consecration to Him. He wants us to give Him our total lives. **Sorry!** You are not going to get Him off your back by giving an honest tithe and liberal offering. He is asking for all of your life. He wants your home your workplace and your neighborhood, He wants your school and your friends, He wants your entertainment and recreational activities, He wants your shopping list, medical bills and your utility bills, He wants you to give him your time, your skills, your talents and your abilities. He really wants all of you. **Question!** What will God do

with it, when we give Him all of your life?. **Answer!** *He will* manage our lives to make us the best that we can be and bless us so much that we will not be able to use all our blessings, so we will in turn become a blessing to others



Sunday December 2nd, 2018

Topic: Honouring God With Your Total Lifestyle

Scripture Reading: Proverbs 3: 9, 10

Opening Song: SDAH # 281

Closing Song: SDAH # 309



I have a physician friend named Dave. Some years ago we sat in the youth chapel of our church talking after a business meeting. We were discussing our spiritual commitments. I told Dave: “I know one thing. I never again want to be part of the status quo. I want to be part of something that means something—that changes things, that changes me.”

Dave said, “I know what you mean. I used to think that if I studied hard and went to medical school and did well, I would be comfortable. That wasn’t it. Then I thought if I married and had a nice family and built a good practice and lived a good life, I would be comfortable. But that didn’t do it. Then I thought if I developed a relationship with Jesus, I would be comfortable. But that didn’t happen. Now I know that I’ll never be comfortable and that is okay because we aren’t meant to be comfortable on this earth. We aren’t intended to stay here.”

Dave’s words that night, 14 years ago, have inspired and encouraged me ever since. It is deceitful and presumptuous to think that when we do enough and earn enough we can

share some of it with God. It all belongs to God (Psalm 50:10-12). Ownership is a concept alien to grace. We are stewards. That means everything we have belongs to God and we are responsible to use it to His glory.

FOCUS AND PRIORITY

Money itself has no morality. It can be used as a tool for good or for evil. The obsession with money is a problem because it measures worth in human terms rather than God's and thus denies Him as both our Provider and our Provision. The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy: "Of course, there is great gain in godliness combined with contentment; for we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it; but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains." (1 Timothy 6:6-10).

I have been in contact with men and women who stretch themselves financially to own a home, a fine car, household furniture, and more. Many of them commute considerable distances and work long hours to pay the debt. Their children are left to long hours at day care centers or at home. In the United States, law offices receive many calls inquiring about divorce procedures after long holiday weekends because the callers discovered that their relationships have withered and died with all the attention paid to accumulating material gadgets.

Obsession with wealth can also be a cause of great turmoil. “The greedy person stirs up strife but whoever trusts in the Lord will be enriched” (Proverbs 28:25). James says that greed and covetousness is at the root of conflicts and disputes leading to violence (James 4:1-2).

The important question is whether one is in love with the Giver or the gift? The rich young ruler was in love with the gift and rejected the Giver (Matthew 19:20-22). Zacchaeus who was rich fell in love with the Giver and became a giver himself as a result (Luke 19:8). It is not about the money, it is about the focus and priority. The poor can be every bit as obsessed with money as the wealthy. In either case, the love of money supplants the love of God.

A GOD-HONOURING LIFESTYLE

How then does the Christian practice a God-honouring lifestyle? Here are Seven things that one can do to ensure fidelity in the stewardship of our lives and the cause of God.

1. God must be honoured in all our decisions and actions.

This can practically be done by examining what scripture says about the issue that concerns us. Is the decision God-honouring?

Jesus says the first and greatest commandment is, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind” (Matthew 22:37). Solomon wrote: “The reward for humility and fear of the Lord is riches

and honour and life” (Proverbs 22:4). To give the Lord our second-best or leftovers in time, money or devotion is to cheat God. (Malachi 1:6-14) Yet, isn’t that exactly what so many of us do. God calls us to honour him in all that we do.

2. Honour God in the little things while you wait for great opportunities

The wise man Solomon counsels, “Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might...” (Ecclesiastes 9:10). The little things faithfully done make room for greater opportunities. There is no bible story that teaches this lesson better than the story of a faithful shepherd boy who eventually became the king. David was not a hireling, not greedy for filthy lucre, or working as men pleasers. Instead, he was dedicated to doing his seemingly morbid task to the best of his ability, defend his charge with his very life. As a skilled musician he must have had great dreams of making it big in the music industry. But David did not sit idly waiting on one lucky chance to make it big. Instead, David was prepared to do whatever was at hand, willingly, honestly and diligently. It is no wonder therefore that when God wanted a soldier and a king to defend His name and His nation He chose to turn to David. It is a dishonour to God and a violation of the growth principle when I am careless and indifferent about being faithful in little things.

3. Honour God with balanced living.

Another synonym for balance could be temperance, they both suggest that extremes can be dangerous. Too far right is as harmful as too far left. Taking it

to the extreme, even the good that you do can be evil spoken of. The balance life requires a plan for the individual, a knowledge of the resources necessary to achieve the goal and a time frame within which to get it done. God is honoured when we approach our activities in a wise and intelligent manner. When there are imbalances the name and character of God is dishonoured. So that when the wife becomes so involved in the activities of the church and she has no time to meet the needs of her husband, she dishonours God, even if the husband is an unbeliever (1 Corinthians 7:4, 5; 13, 14). The father who gives away all his money, even to worthy causes and do not provide for his family, dishonours God (1 Timothy 5:8). The youth who becomes engrossed in the things of the world and has no time for spiritual things, dishonours God (Ecclesiastes 12:1). And when the child spends all their time in play and no time in study, God is dishonoured (2 Timothy 2:15). Balance suggests that I consecrate all to God and give due consideration to each need.

4. Honour God by making wise financial decisions.

A steward will investigate whether an investment or use of funds is prudent. “The clever do all things intelligently, but the fool displays folly....Poverty and disgrace are for the one who ignores instruction but one who heeds reproof is honoured (Proverbs 13: 16-18).

Nehemiah carefully assessed the situation before seeking support to rebuild Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1: 11-16). Jesus said anything that His disciples undertake on His behalf requires carefully counting the cost before beginning (Luke 14:25-

33). Leaping into a project or financial commitment with a cavalier “The Lord will provide” is a disgrace. Undertaking an investment because the profits “will support the Lord’s work” without considering first if the project methods and image accurately reflect the Lord’s revealed will is a disgrace. “Wealth hastily gotten will dwindle, but those who gather little by little will increase it” (Proverbs 13:11).

‘Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,’ and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good or that? So faith by itself, if it has no works is dead.” (James 2:14:17). God is honoured when we spend of ourselves to help the poor who we always have with us (Luke 10:25-37; Matthew 26:11).

5. We must be honest in our dealings, not just finances.

This should go without saying, but ever since the Fall, men and women have been tempted to hide or blame rather than to be transparent (Genesis 3:8-13). Purity of heart is required of those who will see God (Matthew 5:8). Sometimes in the darkest crisis, our integrity and honest stands for truth are all that we have going for us as we wait for God to act (Psalm 25:21).

If we would see Jesus Christ and dwell in His presence we must tell the truth, keep our word and honour our obligations even if it hurts us personally and financially to do so (Psalm 15). “Who will ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in His holy place? Those who have clean hands and pure hearts, who do not lift up their souls to what is false, and who do not swear deceitfully. They

will receive blessing from the Lord, and vindication from the God of their salvation” (Psalm24:3-5). Achieving the furtherance of God’s work on earth never justifies employment of dishonest means. To think otherwise is to reject God’s providence. “Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of evildoers” (Proverbs 14:4; Psalms 1).

6. We must live within the means that God provides to us.

To borrow money to invest or to invest money that you cannot afford to lose is the height of folly. Debt enslaves. “The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is the slave of the lender” (Proverbs 22:7).

Similarly, to pledge money that we don’t have or guarantee the debts of others is something that scripture instructs us to avoid. “Do not be one of those who give pledges, who become surety of debts. If you have nothing with which to pay, why should your bed be taken from under you” (Proverbs 22:27:28). The family who is tempted to live above its means needs to do one of two things:

1. Increase its disposable income or
2. Better planning to bring expenditure with (check sentence construction)

Study carefully your spending habits, considering you spending on needs versus wants. You will fare better if you limit your spending to your needs. Be aware of unnecessary spending in food, clothes and personal items.

Practice the wisdom of the ants and cultivate the habit of saving (Proverbs 6:6). It is best to save one month's income as accessible cash for bill payments instead of depending on present month's income for bill for current bill payments.

7. We must give and serve for no other motivation than love.

Paul denigrates religious service as meaning anything unless it is done in selfless love (1 Corinthians 13:1-3). "Christ's love compels" true service, he says. Jesus commands us to give our entire lives in love (John 15:12-17, 1 John 3:16). Where do we get love like this? Be an unwavering focus on Christ, giving ourselves day by day, hour by hour to Him. "God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and love abides in them...We love because He first loved us" (1 John 4:16, 19).

Wednesday December 5th 2018

Topic: **Honoring God, With Your Health**

Scripture Reading: *“I Beseech you therefore, brethren by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” Romans 12:1*

Opening Song: SDAH # 572 – *“Give of Your Best to the Master”*

Closing Song: SDAH # 493 – *“Fill My Cup Lord”*

Thank God He manifested Himself in the flesh, in the person of Jesus, to model what Romans 12:1 enjoins. We are all born with a health deposit that we must manage in our lifetime. We must remember that we all have an expiry date. Until that day arrives we must manage our health and strength to their maximum.

We all love life which is a gift from God. Thank God that in Him we live and move and have our being. Every one of our six (6) trillion cells needs to be alive and well for us to experience the maximum of life. Thus, our responsibility is to manage what was entrusted to us. It is our personal responsibility that cannot be shifted to our mother or father, husband or wife, brother or sister, doctor or nurse, or any other when we would have reached the age of accountability and possess the ability to function normally. *“So then every one of us shall give an account of himself to God.” (Romans:14:12)*

We are stewards of our physical, mental, and spiritual health. Our Creator counsels us in 1 Thessalonians:5:23: *“And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

Christ exercised as He walked from village to village proclaiming the good news of the kingdom. He breathed in the fresh air and basked in the sunshine of the hills and valleys and the seaside. He drank the spring water of Jacob's well and other wells. He ate barley loaves and fish, the honeycomb and other foods of His time. He told his disciples to come apart and rest a while. He trusted His Father while on earth. On the cross, *"They gave Him vinegar to drink, mingled with gall; and when He had tasted thereof, He would not drink."* (Matthew: 27:34).

He was **A STEWARD** of health.

He availed Himself of fresh	Air
He enjoyed the brilliant	Sunshine
In His Father He had implicit	Trust
His daily walk provided him	Exercise
He drank freely of refreshing clean pure	Water
He refused the harmful on the cross	Abstemious
He took time to come apart and	Rest
He partook of a balanced	Diet

He presented His body a living sacrifice, wholly and acceptable unto God, and so should we.

“There is sickness everywhere, and much of it might be prevented by attention to the Laws of Health. People need to see the bearing of health principles upon their well-being, both for this life and the life to come.”

(Evangelism, pages 525).

Reports from the Ministry of Health in Trinidad and Tobago claim that non-communicable diseases are affecting our population significantly. The church is not immune from some of these diseases, and therefore Ellen White’s counsel in this regard is important “Likewise, if the members of our churches disregard the light on the subject of health reform, they will reap the same result in both spiritual and physical degeneracy.”

(Testimonies: Volume 6, pages 370, 371).

Let us look at the human body. What a variety of parts and operations! One part receiving nutrition, while other parts excrete various elements out of the system; one part inspiring the air to supply the lungs, and another expiring air again, from the lungs; as it were, living and dying by rotation. All these organs working together to sustain health and prolong our lives.

God calls us to exercise self control in life. We should only engage in activities which are the best for us physically, mentally and spiritually, and which are guided by Christian principles. These activities in turn will maintain the body at top capacity. We are called upon to keep our bodies in subjection. Paul wrote: *“But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection.” (1 Corinthians:9:27)*. “The body is brought into subjection to the higher powers of the being.

The passions are to be controlled by the will, which is itself to be under the control of God.” *(Prophets and Kings, pages 488, 489)*.

Throughout Scripture, health is intimately tied to both mental and spiritual well being. In Proverbs, Solomon repeatedly delineates the health advantages that come through knowing and loving God. *“My son, forget not my law, but let thine heart keep my Commandments, for length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee.”* (Proverbs 3:1, 2). There is great benefit in serving the Creator.

“Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase. So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new (non-alcoholic) wine”.(Proverbs:3:9,10) This surely is a stewardship principle; there surely is increase, and wealth.

Some persons value health as wealth. From the diet we choose, to the God we trust, all are important but there is no greater health benefit than eternal life. Christ has made it

plain that knowing Him is the only way for mankind to experience complete peace and joy, and eternal life. (John 3:16, 11:25, 26; 14:6).

Healthful living has numerous dividends – longevity, youthfulness, strength, vitality, joy, and so much more.

A Canadian study in 1973, makes it clear, that improvements in health today, depends far more on how we behave as individuals, in our lifestyle, than on improvements in the quality or quantity of health care. The individual's health is now largely in his/ her own hands.

We have been admonished to choose a healthy lifestyle. This consists of choices made by us in areas over which we have some degree of control. These include decisions about how, when and what we eat or drink, our exercise and rest habits, our sexual practices, and many other choices that affect our risk of disease and by extension our health.

God gave us the gift of choice. Moses pleads for us to choose life. (Deuteronomy: 32:46, 47). Giving Glory to God in our bodies includes making good choices. God requires us *“to maintain our bodies, to sustain it, to present it as a living sacrifice, to keep it holy and acceptable unto God”* Romans: 12:1.

Many seem to think that they have a right to treat their bodies as they please. Our bodies are not our own. *We are bought with a price, redeemed at great cost through the sacrifice of Christ, and we are to give honour to God by living in harmony with His instructions.*

Brethren, God cares about what we put into our bodies, because it is His plan that we lead healthy, productive, spiritual lives. As a steward of Christ, Isaiah says to us today, “... *those who wait on God will renew their strength*” (Isaiah: 40:31).

Let us all, today, try to identify our illness and its cause. Let us work together to make lifestyle changes that can repair damage, prevent disease, and promote health. Let this be our commitment now, in this Stewardship Week, as Stewards of God and of our own health. “...*To present our bodies as living sacrifices to God...*” (Romans:12:1) so that we may “... *prosper and be in good health even as our souls prospereth*” (3 John 2, K.J.V.)

Date: Sabbath December 8th 2018

Topic: *Honouring God in an Unbroken Relationship*

Scripture Reading: Luke 12: 13-21

Opening Song: SDAH # 34

Closing Song: SDAH # 625



He was a *very rich* young man.... He was successful...highly respected in his community...and a decent and law-abiding citizen. He attended church regularly,...gave a faithful tithe and even had a post in church. He was a member of the parliament. He was a successful, upward-moving young professional, who had everything any young person can dream of having; the latest and fastest car; the biggest house, equipped with all the luxuries of modern times; the thinnest and slickest cell phone; a dozen different credit cards; a thriving business; respectability; and a high, powerful position.

This is an ideal picture of success, personal fulfillment and contentment. Yet, by his own admission, this...successful, upward-moving young professional confesses that in spite of all his apparent successes, riches...and achievements, something was still lacking in his life (Matthew 19:20)...*he had come to realize* that money, respectability, fame, position, possessions and even regular church attendance are not sufficient enough to bring real happiness....

Indeed something was lacking. The world today is full of similar apparently rich and successful people, Hollywood...is full of them. They seem to have it all. Yet they stumble from one short-lived marriage into another, even shorter-lived one. They end up in drug rehabilitation centers. They are not happy in their personal lives, for they have discovered that fame, money property, respectability, achievement and all kinds of awards and recognition cannot bring real, lasting happiness....Rich and successful people have discovered that this kind of happiness is not the natural consequence of possessions and things. Material possessions and fame don't bring real meaning to life, only emptiness.

Even the wise King Solomon thought that he could derive meaning and happiness from things. In Ecclesiastes 1 and 2, Solomon is determined to assess the meaning of life. He tells of his attempts to attain this through knowledge or education, yet it availed nothing. He tried riches. He tried achievements. He tried to obtain meaning through hard work. He tried pleasures and fun. He *even* hoped that many wives could bring this lasting happiness....As Solomon attempted to find happiness through many pursuits he concluded, "Then I began to feel depressed. The more I thought about how hard I had worked and that nothing would last, the more discouraged I became. What does a person really get out of life? What does he get for all his work, anxiety and stress?" (Ecclesiastes 2:20, 22, *Clear Word*).

Solomon...very clearly concludes that all his pursuits only brought emptiness or vanity...it does not last forever. The resulting feeling of joy and happiness is only temporary.

Why is it that achievements and riches cannot bring lasting joy, fulfillment and eternal life? Someone once said that man is essentially a spiritual being. Another said that man has been created with a God-shaped vacuum in his heart. Possessions and riches cannot fill that vacuum, neither can it bring lasting joy. Only things of a spiritual nature can really bring personal satisfaction. Things can only satisfy man's physical needs. Life is much more than mere physical existence—more than the pleasures of the senses.

Someone once said that man is not like a wild animal, which can be fully satisfied and contented as long as there is food and shelter. We live on a higher level and consequently need more than things to give true meaning to your lives. *The Broadman Bible Commentary*, volume 9 says: "Possessions do not equal life." ...This is precisely the lesson Jesus teaches in Luke 12:13-21.

A certain man required Jesus' assistance in the settling of an inheritance *conflict*. At first the Master's response seems strange and even impolite....But Jesus used this interjection as an opportunity to teach a very important lesson about the true meaning and the true worth of one's life. This He did through the familiar parable of the rich man who decided to build more barns in which to store his great excess harvest.

He felt quite contented and satisfied with himself after this was done and felt that he could now rest and enjoy his wealth. He thought that he had now reached the place where he had no need of anything or anyone. God, however, called him a fool and demanded his life that very night.

This parable has a very important lesson for us to learn. The Master wants us to know that riches do not determine the true worth of one's life. True meaning in life is not derived from the mere owning of great possessions. He says in Luke 12:15, "Take heed and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

...Nor is life's meaning based on how educated one may be, or how famous, or how respected a person is.

Humankind's deepest quest is the search for the meaning of life; and that cannot be found in things. The rich man in the parable thought he had everything. God called him a fool, because anyone whose decisions about the present do not take into consideration the possibilities of the future is indeed a fool.

He was also foolish because he thought that riches, possessions and achievements were everything. He forgot that a moment after death the millionaire is no richer than a beggar. He needed to bank more eternal and spiritual riches, for character is what a person is before God when they are stripped of their possessions.

Jesus makes the point when He asks, “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?” (Matthew 16:26). ...Christ says, “Anyone who is only interested in his life will end up losing eternal life, but the person who is willing to give up everything to follow me will be happy in this life and will also be given eternal life” (Matthew 16:25, 26, *The Clear Word*).

...In Psalm 73 the psalmist laments the fact that those who serve God always seem to be poor, they are the ones who suffer a great deal and even in their death they suffer. He almost envies the wicked who appear to be rich; their eyes bulge out with the fatness of their prosperity and even in their death they seem to “go without any pain and suffering.” The psalmist admits that this had almost caused him to lose his footing (verse 2). But then he realizes that true happiness is not derived from having and owning riches. This is his conclusion: “I wasn’t thinking right. I was as stupid as an animal. You are always with me and that’s all that matters....Whom do I really have down here? Who really understands me? No one but you. ...All I really need is you....How wonderful to be close to you and to feel you by my side” (Psalm 73:22-28, *The Clear Word*).

It reminds us of the words of the hymn: “I must have the Saviour with me.” This is the true meaning of life. This leads to true fulfillment and lasting happiness when God fills that God-shaped vacuum in man’s heart.

The lesson answers the obvious question which every young person has in his or her heart by now. What is wrong with being rich? Is it wrong to be educated, successful?

Prosperous and upward-moving?

The answer is a resounding and unequivocal “No!” In fact, God wishes that we should all prosper. The Spirit of Prophecy reminds us that “God’s ideal for His children is highr that the highest human thought can reach” (*Desire of Ages*, p. 311). We must encourage each person to become the very best that God intends him or her to become.

The problem was not with the prosperity of the rich man in the parable. Instead, it resides in the fact that to him riches and possessions were everything...

The rich man had forgotten that God blesses us with riches, talents and other special abilities so that He can bless others through our special gifts. Instead of building bigger and better barns, the rich man should have shared his surplus and riches with others. He should have seen himself as a steward who has been entrusted with special gifts, by the Owner and Master. Those he was to use in bringing joy to others.

This is the lesson we ought to learn. Our education, our prosperity, our talents, our special abilities and gifts have been entrusted to us for a special purpose. Our achievements and riches are not to be an end. That end is serving God through blessing others....

We all know why nothing can grow in the Dead Sea—it only receives and does not give. It hoards the water and in the process has become dead. We cannot receive more blessings when we hoard up those we have. The more we give, the greater our capacity to receive. Wealth is indeed a tremendous trust; it becomes dangerous when it owns the owner.

We are challenged to use our talents in the Lord's service, for He blesses us with these special abilities. Remember, the purpose of spiritual gifts is to bring glory to God through edifying, or building up the body of Christ, His church. Each believer has received a talent or gift, which we are challenged to use in service as true stewards. It does not belong to us, it is simply on loan to us so that we may use it.

There is nothing wrong with having riches, education, and success in this life. The rich man was not wrong in planting, building and planning for the future. The problem was with his priorities. He made the pursuit of riches and prosperity the most important and only passion of his life.

Dr. Richard Stenbakken,...has popularized a saying among the south African Adventist students, "The main thing is to keep the main thing in the main thing." It is a matter of priorities. The Lord made it abundantly clear, "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matthew 6:33, NIV). This verse indicates that the "things" spoken of are food, clothing and shelter. These we will get because our Lord loves and cares for us. He will ensure that we have what we need, but we must seek Him *first* and know Him *first* and enter into a personal relationship with Him *first*.

"We are Christ's witnesses and we are not to allow worldly interests so to absorb our time and attention that we pay no heed to the things that God has said must come first" (*Messages to Young People*, p. 314).

Our relationship with a personal Saviour is the most important business of life. Going after material things can only bring temporary and transitory happiness. When we seek to know Him first, we will not just be happy and contented; we will also enjoy the things that will later be added.

God has created man for the express purpose of enjoying unbroken communication with Him. The devil wants to mar that relationship by getting us to focus on things, riches and other minor details. But today God bids you to:

*“Turn your eyes upon Jesus;
Look full in His wonderful face;
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace.”*
(The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal p. 290)

Maybe it’s time for you and me to look at Jesus. Our true worth is only discovered and enjoyed through living and walking with Jesus and then by telling others about that wonderful relationship.

Invest your time, talents, energy and life in God’s business—in His kingdom. Investing in this world’s things will be futile.... *God bless you.*

