

Central Study Hour – Sabbath School Lesson Notes

“Stewardship”: Lesson 1, “The Influence of Materialism”

QUARTERLY INTRODUCTION & SABBATH AFTERNOON

Quarterly Introduction: Share highlights to show that stewardship is not just about money or personal property. It’s how we handle everything we have and are, the **5 T’s**: 1.) our treasures, 2.) our talents, 3.) our time, 4.) our temple (body), and 5.) our territory (environment and sphere of influence; family, neighbors, work associates, etc.). “Our lives as Christian stewards reflect God’s character to the world.”

Share the two possible ultimate ends near the bottom of p. 3 (**Matt. 7:23** vs. **Matt. 25:23**). With these two possible outcomes – basically life or death, isn’t it worth our time to understand stewardship better?

Sabbath Afternoon: Share most of this very important page. After the final paragraph, ask if they agree.

MONDAY: “The God of This World”

It seems to be money, wealth and materialism, right? Share most of the 2nd paragraph.

Read 1 John 2:15-17. *What does this text tell you about what really matters?* Doing the will of God matters most. He who trusts and follows God’s will shall live forever, but all the things of the world will pass away.

There is a sense of “**love of the world**” that is good. “**God so loved the world**” that Jesus came to die for us. God wants us to love like He does.

“**Love one another, as I have loved you**’ (**John 15:12**); when we love the world as He has loved it, then for us His mission is accomplished. We are fitted for heaven; for we have heaven in our hearts.” *The Desire of Ages*, p. 641.

When love of the world means to love people like God does, or to love whatever is truth and good in the world, or to take care of our environment (don’t pollute, litter), then love of the world is good. When John says to love not the world, obviously, he means the sin in the world or getting caught up, too attached or absorbed by the things of the world and end up perishing with the world in the end.

In the good sense, what way is the most important way to love the world? **Read Matt. 25:40.**

“In as much as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”

“In the great judgment day, those who have not worked for Christ, who have drifted along thinking of themselves, caring for themselves, will be placed by the Judge of the whole earth with those who did evil. They receive the same condemnation.” *The Desire of Ages*, p. 641.

In this sense, we must really love the world more! Overlooking the needs of the poor and destitute will surely show our unfitness for heaven just as much as a life of crime or immorality. Christianity isn’t merely about not being bad, it’s about learning to love like Jesus. *Is feeding the hungry good stewardship?* Surely!

The Teacher's Comments on p. 16 has a good explanation of the three temptations of the world from **1 John 2:16**. *What does John mean by the "lusts of the flesh"?* Base desires and indulgence of every kind. *What does he mean by the "lust of the eyes"?* Covetousness and false values – I see, I want. *What does he mean by "the pride of life"?* Pride, ego, narcissism. Which of these three is most like materialism (today's lesson)? It's the lust of the eyes for possessions, things, wealth, etc. We must remember that all these things will, one day, burn.

Read Luke 14:33. *What is Jesus telling us here, too, about what is of supreme importance for the Christian?* Isn't it that we must be willing to put Christ before anything else? The last two paragraphs in the narrative are so well-put, it is recommended to share both with the question that follows. Discuss briefly the questions from the box at the bottom of the page.

SUNDAY: Filling the Barns

Share Highlights from **Luke 12:15-21**. *What is the principle in verses 20-21?* We need to be rich in God, not in ourselves, or we will lose our souls. Life is more than having things and coveting more things (**vs 15**). *How might this principle apply to someone who is not necessarily rich?*

Share the 1st sentence of the narrative.

Share Teacher's Comments, p. 14. "Materialism is not primarily about how much one has; it is about a person's attitude toward whatever he or she has." Share the contrast between Job (rich) and Achan (poor). Consider the "opening activity" here for thought. Ultimately, we need to move on to a more mature focus on values and not merely be treasuring more valuable stuff as indicated in the saying, "the only difference between men and boys is the price of their toys."

Read Deuteronomy 8:10-14. *In what ways can any church member be in danger from the threat warned about here?* When we experience God's blessings, couldn't we start thinking just a little bit, that it's something about us; our smarts, being better than others, until we start forgetting how much we really need God?

Did anybody try the question in the box at the bottom of the page? Discuss as desired.

TUESDAY: "The Allure of Materialism"

Read the first three sentences of the narrative. Beautiful women with alluring smiles are probably the most frequent appeal. Remember the Marlboro Man commercials? Several of those handsome, rugged Marlboro men died of lung cancer or emphysema. Much advertising appeals to lust of the flesh, sensuality through the eyes.

Read Matt. 6:22-24. *What does the eye represent according to Christian thought and action?* Doesn't the eye equal what you focus on, what you choose, which way you will walk? *How should we as Christians react to the subtle images that tempt us to consume what we really don't need?* Can't we choose to look away? We should pray for help, surrender all, and fix our eyes somewhere else. Share the verse and the question in the box at the bottom of the page. Could car racing qualify as a lust of the flesh? Gluttony? Drinking alcohol, Compulsive gambling? Adrenalin pumping movies? Would an entertainment addiction be a lust of the flesh?

WEDNESDAY: "Love of Self"

The love of self is basically the same as "the pride of life." Share Rom. 12:3 and highlights from the top half of the page.

Read 1 Tim. 6:10. *What danger is Paul warning about here? The love of money. Which of the 3 forms of worldliness from 1 John 2:16 fits the love of money? The "lust of the eyes" for wealth. Share highlights from the paragraph in the lower part of the page about the effect of materialism on the ego.*

Read Phil. 2:3. Ask the question in the box at the bottom of the page. Discuss as needed.

THURSDAY: "The Ultimate Futility of Materialism"

"Materialism offers us an identity that is synonymous with our possessions. In other words, we define ourselves on the basis of what we own and what we can buy of this world's goods." However, for the many people who love God, "their identity is blended with His in a way that material possessions can't dislodge."

What does it mean to be God's possession, and where do we find our identity? In **Deut. 7:6** Israel is identified with God as a "**special people.**" In **John 15:5** Jesus describes His followers connected to Him as branches to the vine. Paul describes the connection as "**Christ living in me**" in **Gal. 2:20.**

Read 1 Peter 2:9. *In this verse what does it mean to be God's possession, and where do we find our identity? We are a "chosen generation...a peculiar people." The Greek word translated as peculiar means beyond the usual, special – because of our relationship with God. This is our true identity. We are children of God! Our identity is not in our stuff or in what other people think of us.*

Share, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 668 from the narrative for another perspective on finding our identity in God. Share highlights from the last paragraph, then ask the question in the box at the bottom.

Conclusion: From Friday's page, Read 5T 133. "Materialism cannot speak, but it knows every language. It knows how to provide pleasure and gratification to both the rich and the poor...it causes people to trust in what they own as opposed to trusting in God." Ask Question #1. Might the poor have an even stronger urge to hang on to what they have – make it their life – out of a sense of desperation? *How can we keep money and our need for money in the right biblical perspective?*

Teacher's Comments, p. 13. For consideration of the above question, Share the goals of the lesson from the top of the page. See "**Know**" and "**Feel.**" For thought, read question I. A., III. A, and III. B. Answer: We must just keep giving and make it a habit. Give to the poor and homeless. Give to worthy church ministries and projects.

Option for close of the lesson: Activities on p. 17 of the Teacher's Comments. "Our use of money speaks volumes about our real values and preferences." Share activity #1. *What would tracking our detailed expenditures actually reveal about our values?*