

Ellen G. White Estate

MY JOURNEY TO LIFE

STEWARDSHIP

In What Sense are Christians "Stewards?"

STEP 25 OF 28



My Journey to Life, Step 25

Foreword

My Journey to Life will give you the keys for finding peace of mind, harmony of body, and success in relationships. Every step will transform your outlook as you unpack each lesson. We pray they will help you to fall in love with the greatest Teacher this world has ever known. So together, let's walk the pathway step-by-step to a new life in Jesus.

Preface

Where does the idea of “stewardship” originate? What does it mean to be a faithful steward? In our lesson today, we'll explore our responsibility, as followers of Christ, to practice stewardship in all aspects of life.

Step Twenty-five—Stewardship

Question: In What Sense are Christians “Stewards?” “We are God’s stewards, entrusted by Him with time and opportunities, abilities and possessions, and the blessings of the earth and its resources. We are responsible to Him for their proper use. We acknowledge God’s ownership by faithful service to Him and our fellow human beings and by returning tithe and giving offerings for the proclamation of His gospel and the support and growth of His church. Stewardship is a privilege given to us by God for nurture in love and the victory over selfishness and covetousness. Stewards rejoice in the blessings that come to others as a result of their faithfulness.”—*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, p. 307

Bible Discovery: Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15; 1 Chronicles 29:14; Haggai 1:3-11; Malachi 3:8-12; Matthew 23:23; Romans 15:26, 27; 1 Corinthians 9:9-14; 2 Corinthians 8:1-15; 9:7

Further Reading: Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers*, (1892 ed.), p. 320.1

1. What is “stewardship?” The principle of stewardship has its origin in Creation and is firmly rooted in the whole of Scripture. In Genesis 1:1-31-3:1-24, God emerges as the gracious Creator of all things. Human beings created in His image were to be His representatives to care for the earth and each other.

When we give all that we have and are back to God, He accepts our surrender, but then puts us back in charge of our talents, abilities, time, and possessions, making us stewards, or caretakers, of everything that we possess. After we give all to God, we continue learning how to be good, wise, and unselfish managers of everything entrusted to us.

Stewardship also includes proclamation of the Good News of the gospel. As Christians, we have been recipients of God’s wonderful grace and free salvation and are now privileged as God’s “deputies” to share the message of hope and life which we ourselves have received.

Bible Discovery: Psalm 8:6; 107:31; Ecclesiastes 9:10; 1 Corinthians 9:16; 2 Corinthians 3:3; James 1:17

Further Reading: Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 139.2

2. Why do we practice stewardship? Our primary reason for sacrificial giving and sharing is the example of stewardship left by Jesus when He endured hunger, privation, nakedness and ultimately the cross on our behalf. All the stewardship activities of the church—sharing, teaching, preaching, baptizing—take on fresh meaning when seen through the lens of Christ’s great love. Stewardship becomes the root of our mission, the basis of sharing the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14:6-12 with the world.

At Creation, God shared His possessions with humanity, and He continues to be the true owner of the world, its inhabitants, and its goods. We give God glory through careful stewardship of the time, talent, and treasure He has entrusted to us. Because we were “reclaimed” at the cross, we cheerfully practice love-in-action to others as generous stewards of the gifts of Christ. These good works are the outworking of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and not a means to secure salvation.

Bible Discovery: Psalm 24:1; Matthew 10:5-8; 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20; 2 Corinthians 9:6, 7; Revelation 14:7

Further Reading: Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, bk. 2, p. 134.1

3. What does it mean to “tithe?” Tithing means returning a portion of our increase to the Lord, honoring Him as the provider of all things. As one-seventh of our time (the Sabbath) belongs to God (Exodus 20:8-11), so does one tenth of all material things we acquire. We tithe because God commanded us to do so. It is part of the covenant between God and His people.

Tithing is a beautiful system of equity. The proportional claim on the rich and on the poor reminds us that all can return to God a tithe in response to what He has lent us to manage.

Bible Discovery: Genesis 14:20; Leviticus 27:30, 32; Deuteronomy 14:22; Proverbs 3:9; Malachi 3:8-11

Further Reading: Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 404.4

4. Are there biblical examples of tithing? Yes, tithing is shown as an important practice throughout Scripture. Abraham gave Melchizedek, the priest of God Most High, “a tithe of all.” As Abraham paid tithe to the priest Melchizedek, so New Testament believers give tithe to Christ, our High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 5:9, 10; 7:1-22). Jacob understood the tithing requirement and vowed to the Lord, “Of all that You give me I will surely

give a tenth to You” (Genesis 28:22). After the Exodus, God reaffirmed the law of tithing as a divinely mandated practice upon which Israel’s prosperity depended (Deuteronomy 12:6, 11, 17).

Jesus Himself validated the principle of tithing and condemned those who violate its spirit (Matthew 23:23). As God’s covenant people, we continue to show love and respect for God as we cheerfully return our tithes with gratitude to the Giver.

Bible Discovery: Genesis 14:18-20; 28:22; Numbers 18:24, 26, 28; Deuteronomy 14:22; Nehemiah 13:12

Further Reading: Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, December 8, 1896, par. 1

5. Does the Bible say how tithes should be used? Tithes are sacred (Leviticus 27:30-32). They are to be “brought into the storehouse” (Malachi 3:10). In ancient Israel, tithe was used exclusively for the Levitical priesthood, for those ministering and instructing in the law of the Lord. In New Testament times, tithe was still to be used to support the ministry of God’s church (1 Corinthians 9:11-14). Today, tithes are used to provide a living for the ministry of the church and its gospel outreach (1 Timothy 5:18).

Bible Discovery: Numbers 18:21, 24; Deuteronomy 25:4; Nehemiah 12:44, 45; 13:12, 13; Matthew 10:10; Luke 10:7; 1 Corinthians 9:11-14

Further Reading: Ellen G. White, 14LtMs, *Manuscript 149*, 1899, par. 6; *Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 102.3; *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, pp. 247.1; 248.3

6. How do offerings differ from tithe? God commands an exact amount for tithing—10 percent. But how can grateful Christians limit their contributions to tithe? In Israel the tabernacle, and later the Temple, were built from “freewill offerings.” Some Bible students believe that ancient Israel contributed at least one, possibly two, second “tithes” in the form of freewill offerings (Numbers 18:21; Deuteronomy 14:23) Each person was to give back to the Lord since He made them prosperous. Returning to God the bounties He had showered upon them with a grateful gift offering. Today there are many opportunities to give to agencies who advocate tangibly for the poor, the diseased, the oppressed, and those without a knowledge of the gospel of Christ.

In the local church, special offerings are used to support the work of the church and its upkeep, as well as Christian education, Christian youth camps, work for the blind and deaf, religious liberty, and many other worthy projects. The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) provides for victims of catastrophe, famine, and oppression around the world. Evangelistic organizations such as Voice of Prophecy, It Is Written, Breath of Life and many others are supported in their outreach by the offerings from caring people of faith.

Bible Discovery: Exodus 30:12, 16; 36:2-7; Psalm 96:8; Malachi 3:8; Matthew 10:8; Luke 12:48

Further Reading: Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 75.1

7. How does the stewardship principle apply to our remaining money after we have returned tithes and offerings to God? All things come from God; therefore, our money is not our own. It is given to us “in trust.” Even after we have returned the tithe, which is rightfully His, God wishes us to carefully manage our remaining monies, that our money will be a blessing.

While it is essential to care for the needy members in our churches and in our communities, stewardship responsibility includes caring for the needs of our own family.

Bible Discovery: 1 Chronicles 29:14; Proverbs 13:22; 1 Corinthians 4:1, 2; Philippians 2:3, 4; 1 Timothy 5:8; James 2:8

Further Reading: Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 133.1

8. What are the categories of stewardship other than monetary?

- **Grace:** Our greatest gift from God is eternal life (John 3:16). We are to share the Good News through preaching and teaching, focusing particularly at this time of earth history on Revelation 14:6-12 and pointing to the glorious outcome described in the last chapters of Revelation.
- **Life:** As stewards of the life gifted to humanity, Adventists promote wholistic, healthful living, operating medical, educational, and relief organizations.
- **Abilities:** Stewardship includes maximizing our God-given abilities and talents through judicious use. Christians should make the best possible use of their communication skills to comfort others and share the good news of Jesus (Matthew 25:31-45). In Jesus’ parable of Luke 19:12-27, the talent that was buried and did not grow was taken away from the servant.
- **Time** is a precious gift of God and never to be carelessly frittered away. Each moment is to be used to improve our relationship with the Creator, develop our gifts, and share love and caring with others. The Sabbath is a universal gift of time to be sacredly observed in developing relationships—with God, our family, and others who need our love and caring. In observing its holy hours, we are reminded that Jesus is Lord of all and yet desires deeper connection with us.
- **Earth:** In the Garden of Eden, the Creator commanded Adam and Eve to be stewards of the earth (Genesis 1:26, 28). We are also stewards of this world and should do everything to maintain optimum life on all levels by keeping the ecological balance intact, rather than exploiting its resources for greed (Revelation 11:18).
- **Children** are among God’s most precious gifts (Psalm 127:3). Parents are to prepare their children to be good citizens of this earth (Titus 3:1) and inherit the world to come, by God’s redeeming grace (Jeremiah 13:20). Christian education, discipline and training are tools that can be used by the Spirit of God to prepare children to become full stewards of all their abilities. Raising children to love and serve Jesus as well as others is the stewardship duty and privilege of parents and of the entire community of faith. (Isaiah 54:13).

Bible Discovery: Exodus 31: 2-6; Psalm 8:6; 24:1; Romans 12:4-8; 2 Corinthians 5:18; Ephesians 5:15-17; 1 Peter 2:9

Further Reading: Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, May 16, 1882, par. 15

9. What are the personal blessings and benefits to those practicing Christian stewardship?

God has placed us in the role of stewards for our benefit, not for His! As we consecrate our entire life to Him, we will see an increase in our own spiritual growth and character development. Best of all, we will sense a deeper connection with Jesus as we become increasingly aware of God’s ceaseless giving and ownership of everything.

Our giving also helps root out covetousness and selfishness from our lives. We will have increasing compassion and love for others. As we give to and serve others, our own happiness will increase (Acts 20:35). We will find ourselves not just content, but joyful in all circumstances (Philippians 4:11).

Bible Discovery: Psalm 18:20; Malachi 3:8-12; Matthew 25:23; Colossians 3:23, 24; 1 Timothy 6:17-19

Further Reading: Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Stewardship*, pp. 89.2; 112.4

10. How does our careful stewardship bless others? True stewards bless all whom they contact with acts of loving service, sharing anything God has bestowed that might benefit someone else. Generosity given in the spirit of Christ helps the receiver know the nature of God and can be an agency to draw the recipient toward Him.

Not only are individuals blessed by our acts of loving charity, the adoption of the biblical plan of stewardship is essential for the church. The church will have adequate funds to supply its various ministries and will be “a witness to all the nations” (Matthew 24:14), extending the blessings of the gospel to others.

Bible Discovery: Psalm 72:12; Proverbs 11:25; Ecclesiastes 4:9, 19; Matthew 25:40; Luke 3:11; 2 Corinthians 9:6, 7

Further Reading: Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 25.1

11. How seriously does the Bible consider unfaithfulness in tithes and offering? Failure to return tithe is a breach of covenant relationship with God. Not only does it put our temporal blessings in jeopardy, the promise of redemptive grace from God also becomes void.

In contrast to the generosity and faithful giving of the early Christians in Jerusalem (Acts 4:32), Ananias and Sapphira plotted together to withhold a large portion of the proceeds from the sale of a piece of real estate, which they had pledged to give entirely to the Lord. Their deception in the matter was met with swift and terrible judgment. Each lied to Peter when questioned about the matter and each was struck dead (Acts 5:1-11). This judgment was a

powerful reminder to the fledgling church that God detects hidden sin, and that He will not be mocked or robbed.

Bible Discovery: Deuteronomy 28:12, 15; Proverbs 28:22, 27; Haggai 1:1-11; Malachi 3:12; Luke 12:48; 1 John 3:17

Further Reading: Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Stewardship*, pp. 212.2- 213.1

12. In what ways does Jesus serve as the ultimate steward? Not only did Jesus share His possessions with humanity at Creation, but He also reclaimed as His own that which Adam and Eve surrendered to Satan at the Fall. When we consider the suffering Jesus endured on our behalf at the cross, any sacrifice we make for Him seems trivial. Jesus' example of selflessness inspires us to be like Him.

How God longs for His people to become His caring church—caring for those within the church and without. Since Christ died for the world, stewardship, in its broadest sense, is also for the world.

Bible Discovery: Luke 19:10; John 5:36; Romans 8:32; 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20; 2 Corinthians 8:9

Further Reading: Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, November 15, 1906, par. 10

Reflection...

Stewardship is giving—our time, our abilities, our money, our compassion—to honor God in all things.

Next Step...

The night before His death, Jesus established an important rite He intended believers to celebrate until His Second Coming. What was it, and how is it significant for our lives today?

Discussion Questions

1. Besides money, what else is included in stewardship?
2. What does "bring all the tithes into the storehouse" mean? (Malachi.3:10)
3. Is returning tithe optional for a Christian?

Further Reading

Official Adventist Website: <https://adventist.org/stewardship>

Contact Information

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Request a personal Bible study: <https://www.bibleschools.com/en/personal-studies>

Visit your local Seventh-day Adventist Church: <https://www.adventistlocator.org>

Online prayer room: <https://www.wepray.mobi>