

BIBLE "STEWARDSHIP"

As one studies God's holy Bible, there comes an increasing conviction that the converted Christian has an inescapable responsibility to do, and not to do, certain things in relation to what God has revealed. In saying this, we must always remember that we do, or obey, or refrain from that which is wrong, not to secure God's acceptance and favor, but as a natural result of a faith and love relationship with Christ, as a result of our being new "creatures" (2 Corinthians 5:17), in whom Christ lives (Galatians 2:20). This new-found responsibility is understood only by the converted man or woman.

In the Bible this responsibility is often referred to as "stewardship." The word "steward" conveys the idea that God has entrusted something to us, and we are responsible to Him for the way we use it. In our studies on the Sabbath, we have already sensed our responsibility or stewardship to God in relation to our time. We are responsible for how we use the seventh day, and also for our use of time every day of the week. In this lesson we will focus on another aspect of stewardship--our means.

1. First, what gives God such authority over His creatures? What answer could we give after reading Genesis 1:1, Psalms 24:1,2, Psalms 50:10-12, and Haggai 2:8?

2. What further reason does God have on our lives, as made clear in 1 Timothy 2:5,6, and 1 Corinthians 6:20?

3. In spite of all that God has done for us, what right can we all still exercise, according to Matthew 19:16-22?

4. What is the basic problem when a person refuses God's rightful claims to expect of him faithful stewardship? Tie these two texts together.

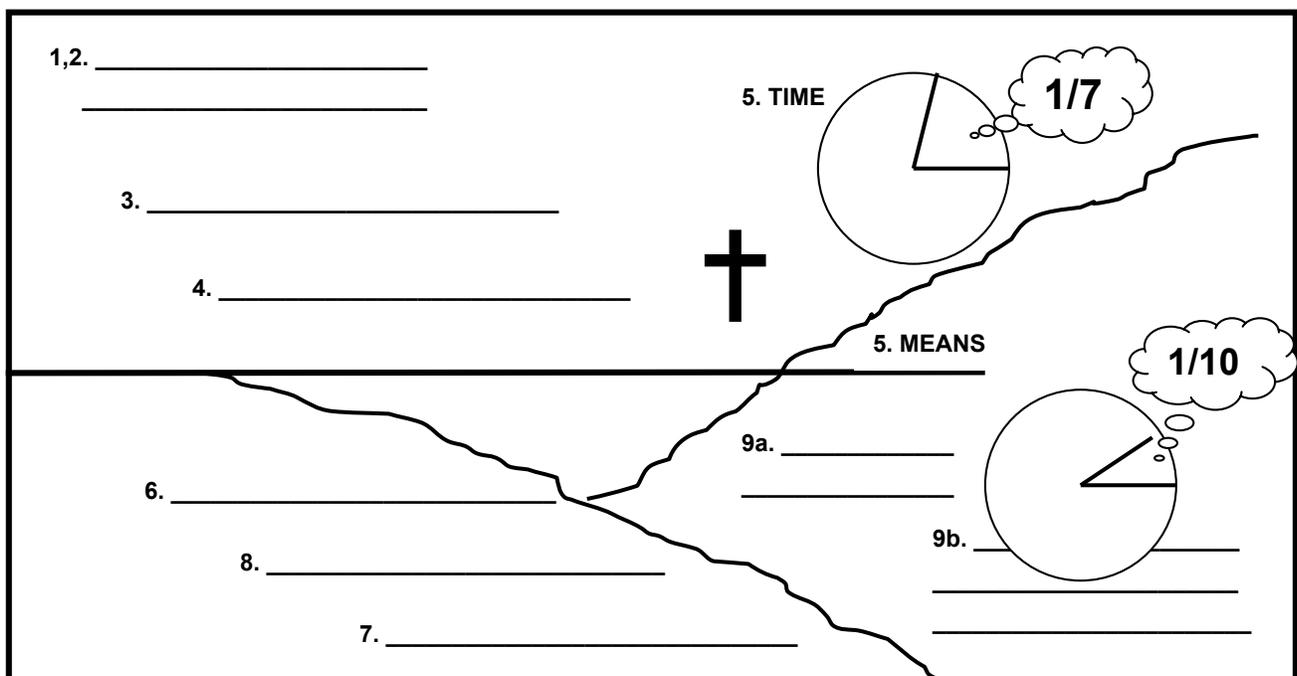
- (a) Read the parable in Matthew 25:14-30. Compare how many words it took the faithful servants to report in verses 20,22, with how many words there were in the excuse of the unfaithful servant in verses 24,25. What did the third servant accuse God of in verse 24?

- (b) How is the problem of this unfaithful servant made clear in the contrasting counsel of Jesus that very same morning to the lawyer in Matthew 22:37?

5. God claims our faithfulness in relation to our time. The God of life gives us our time to live. He sustains us every day, whether we recognize it or not. Read Deuteronomy 8:17,18. In light of this truth, He invites us to become faithful stewards with our money as well as our time. What was God's special request to Israel called in Leviticus 27:30,32, and how much was it to be?

6. What is the first record of tithing in the Bible? Summarize Genesis 14:18-20.

7. When God spoke to Israel about tithing in Malachi's day (about 425 BC), in Malachi 3,
 - (a) What was His warning in verses 8,9? _____
 - (b) What was His promised blessing in verse 10? _____
8. What was the tithe used for in the Old Testament period? How does Numbers 18:20-24 clarify this? _____
9. Does tithing have a part in the beliefs and development of the New Testament Christian church? Is the tithing principle still needed? How does (b) below help us to see its right usage?
 - (a) Matthew 23:23 _____
 - (b) 1 Corinthians 9:13,14 _____
10. As with all of our time, so God requires careful usage by His stewards of all of our means – including additional offerings for the needs of the church, for those in need, and in our daily personal living. A careful reading of Proverbs 19:17, Matthew 19:21, 1 Corinthians 16:1,2, and 2 Corinthians 9:7 will help us to understand these things.
11. The key to faithfulness in all stewardship--of time, money, treatment of our body health--is found in question 4(b), in being so close to Jesus every day that we are motivated by His indwelling love to do His will in all things. When we respond to this love, God is being placed above self, which is "key" to our final and full restoration to the image of God. What is the admonition of 1 Corinthians 4:1,2?



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Notes for the Instructor

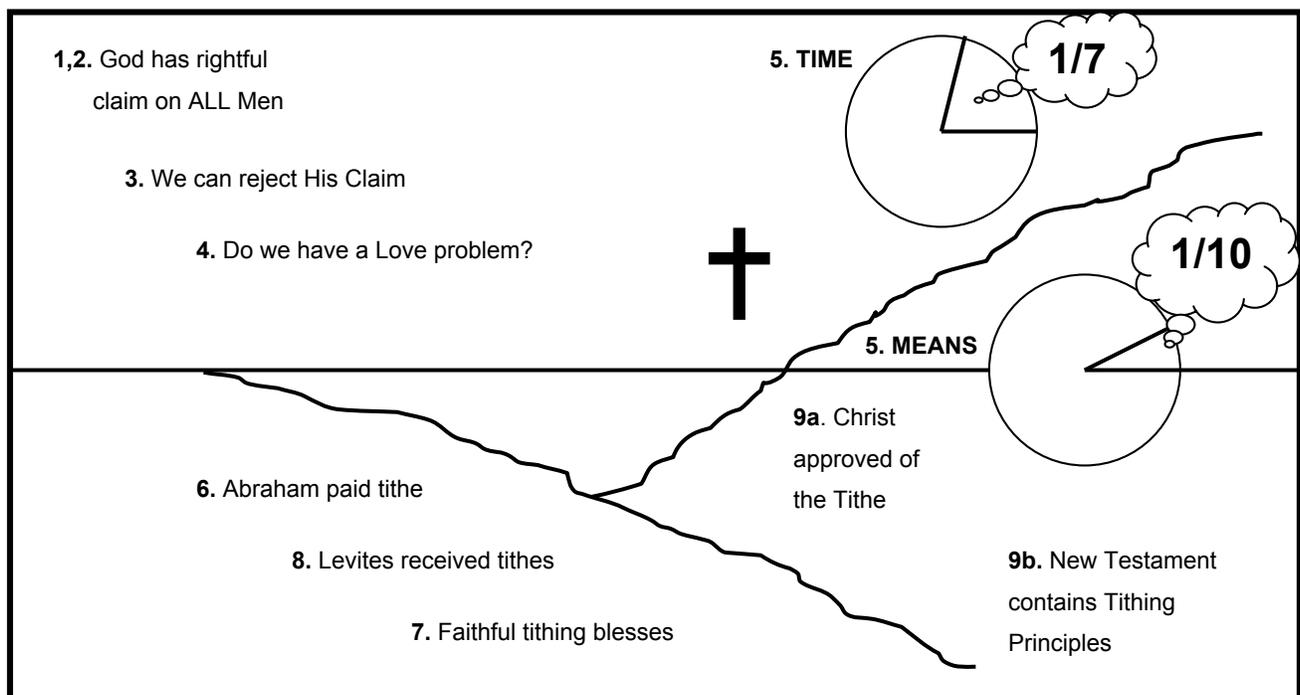
Purpose of lesson 24: When we studied the Sabbath truth, we entered into the area of Christian responsibility or stewardship called "time." Christ's Object Lessons, page 342, says, "Our time belongs to God. Every moment is His, and we are under the most solemn obligation to improve it to His glory. Of no talent He has given will He require a more strict account than of our time." In this lesson we remain in the realm of stewardship, and study God's requirements in relation to our means--another talent (see COL 351,352). We must include our tithes, offerings, even how we treat the personal use of our income. Thus, we have the reason for the order of our lessons at this point in the series.

During the lesson itself: The sequence of thoughts is very simple: God has rightful authority over every human being, we can all reject it, only the love motivation from Calvary will lead us to take His claims seriously and respond in a way pleasing to God, tithing is one method that God has ordained to test our relation to Him, and its chief benefit is in the fact that the faithful tither places God first, thus continually permitting his Lord to further destroy his selfishness, which is what restoration to the likeness of our selfless God is all about. Divine love must be permitted to finally destroy, replace, all selfishness.

In question 4, (a) and (b), make it clear that the man who buried his one talent was simply proving that he did not love God. This is the "bottom line" of unfaithfulness. Make spiritual blessings the key point of question 7(b).

Appeal: Carefully read the appeal that concludes this study in Unto a Perfect Man, pages 146, 147. These ideas are briefly summarized in question 10 of this lesson.

Illustration: Let the illustration be a review of the high points, with the comparison between Sabbath and tithing shown by the two circles.



Introduction**2 Corinthians 5:17**

¹⁷Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

Galatians 2:20

²⁰I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

1. Genesis 1:1

¹In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Psalms 24:1, 2

- ¹ The earth *is* the Lord'S, and all its fullness,
The world and those who dwell therein.
² For He has founded it upon the seas,
And established it upon the waters.

Psalms 50:10-12

- ¹⁰ For every beast of the forest *is* Mine,
And the cattle on a thousand hills.
¹¹ I know all the birds of the mountains,
And the wild beasts of the field *are* Mine.
¹² "If I were hungry, I would not tell you;
For the world *is* Mine, and all its fullness.

Haggai 2:8

⁸'The silver *is* Mine, and the gold *is* Mine,' says the Lord of hosts.

Answer: God owns everything because He created everything.

2. 1 Timothy 2:5, 6

⁵For *there is* one God and one Mediator between God and men, *the* Man Christ Jesus, ⁶who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time,

1 Corinthians 6:20

²⁰For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

Answer: God paid the price, gave himself as a ransom for us, that that we might be saved (made free from the penalty of sin).

3. Matthew 19:16-22

¹⁶Now behold, one came and said to Him, "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?"

¹⁷So He said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one *is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.*"

¹⁸He said to Him, "Which ones?"

Jesus said, "*You shall not murder, 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,'* ¹⁹*'Honor your father and your mother,'* and, *'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'*"

²⁰The young man said to Him, "All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?"

²¹Jesus said to him, "*If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.*"

²²But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

Answer: We still have option to either "follow Jesus" or go our own way and do things our way.

4a. Matthew 25:14-30

¹⁴*"For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. ¹⁵And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. ¹⁶Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. ¹⁷And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. ¹⁸But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money. ¹⁹After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them.*

²⁰*"So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.' ²¹His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' ²²He also who had received two talents came and said, 'Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.' ²³His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'*

²⁴*"Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. ²⁵And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.'*

²⁶*"But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. ²⁷So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. ²⁸So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents.*

²⁹*"For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. ³⁰And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'*

Answer: Faithful servant = few words. Unfaithful servant = lots of excuses

4b. Matthew 22:37

³⁷Jesus said to him, "*'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.'*"

Answer: We must love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, and mind.

5. Deuteronomy 8:17, 18

¹⁷then you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.'

¹⁸"And you shall remember the Lord your God, for *it is* He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as *it is* this day.

Leviticus 27:30, 32

³⁰And 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 to the Lord.

³²And concerning the tithe of the herd or the flock, of whatever passes under the rod, the tenth one shall be holy to the Lord.

Answer: Tithe. 10%.

6. Genesis 14:18-20

¹⁸Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he *was* the priest of God Most High. ¹⁹And he blessed him and said:

"Blessed be Abram of God Most High,
Possessor of heaven and earth;

²⁰ And blessed be God Most High,
Who has delivered your enemies into your hand."

And he gave him a tithe of all.

Answer: Abraham gave a tithe to the priest Melchizedek.
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7. Malachi 3

¹ "Behold, I send My messenger,
And he will prepare the way before Me.
And the Lord, whom you seek,
Will suddenly come to His temple,
Even the Messenger of the covenant,
In whom you delight.
Behold, He is coming,"
Says the Lord of hosts.

² "But who can endure the day of His coming?
And who can stand when He appears?
For He *is* like a refiner's fire
And like launderers' soap.

³ He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver;
He will purify the sons of Levi,
And purge them as gold and silver,
That they may offer to the Lord
An offering in righteousness.

- 4 "Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem
Will be pleasant to the Lord,
As in the days of old,
As in former years.
- 5 And I will come near you for judgment;
I will be a swift witness
Against sorcerers,
Against adulterers,
Against perjurers,
Against those who exploit wage earners and widows and orphans,
And against those who turn away an alien—
Because they do not fear Me,"
Says the Lord of hosts.
- 6 "For I *am* the Lord, I do not change;
Therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob.
- 7 Yet from the days of your fathers
You have gone away from My ordinances
And have not kept *them*.
Return to Me, and I will return to you,"
Says the Lord of hosts.
"But you said,
'In what way shall we return?'
- 8 "Will a man rob God?
Yet you have robbed Me!
But you say,
'In what way have we robbed You?'
In tithes and offerings.
- 9 You are cursed with a curse,
For you have robbed Me,
Even this whole nation.
- 10 Bring all the tithes into the storehouse,
That there may be food in My house,
And try Me now in this,"
Says the Lord of hosts,
"If I will not open for you the windows of heaven
And pour out for you *such* blessing
That *there will not be room enough to receive it*.
- 11 "And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes,
So that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground,
Nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field,"
Says the Lord of hosts;
- 12 And all nations will call you blessed,
For you will be a delightful land,"
Says the Lord of hosts.
- 13 "Your words have been harsh against Me,"
Says the Lord,
"Yet you say,
'What have we spoken against You?'
- 14 You have said,
'It is useless to serve God;
What profit *is it* that we have kept His ordinance,
And that we have walked as mourners
Before the Lord of hosts?
- 15 So now we call the proud blessed,
For those who do wickedness are raised up;

- They even tempt God and go free.”
- 16 Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another,
And the Lord listened and heard *them*;
So a book of remembrance was written before Him
For those who fear the Lord
And who meditate on His name.
- 17 “They shall be Mine,” says the Lord of hosts,
“On the day that I make them My jewels.
And I will spare them
As a man spares his own son who serves him.”
- 18 Then you shall again discern
Between the righteous and the wicked,
Between one who serves God
And one who does not serve Him.

Answer: a) Do not rob from God. b) Blessing will come to those who are faithful in tithes & offerings.

8. Numbers 18:20-24

- ²⁰Then the Lord said to Aaron: “You shall have no inheritance in their land, nor shall you have any portion among them; I *am* your portion and your inheritance among the children of Israel.
- ²¹“Behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tithes in Israel as an inheritance in return for the work which they perform, the work of the tabernacle of meeting. ²²Hereafter the children of Israel shall not come near the tabernacle of meeting, lest they bear sin and die. ²³But the Levites shall perform the work of the tabernacle of meeting, and they shall bear their iniquity; *it shall be* a statute forever, throughout your generations, that among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance. ²⁴For the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer up *as a* heave offering to the Lord, I have given to the Levites as an inheritance; therefore I have said to them, ‘Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance.’”

Answer: To support the tribe of Levi in their work in the temple.

9a. Matthew 23:23

- ²³“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier *matters* of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.

Answer: Justice, mercy, and faith is more important than carrying tithing to an extreme in tithing things like mint, anise, & cummin.

9b. 1 Corinthians 9:13, 14

- ¹³Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat *of the things* of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of *the offerings* of the altar? ¹⁴Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.

Answer: The tithe is to be used to support those who spread the gospel.

10. Proverbs 19:17

¹⁷ He who has pity on the poor lends to the Lord,
And He will pay back what he has given.

Matthew 19:21

²¹ Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

1 Corinthians 16:1, 2

¹Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: ²On the first *day* of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.

2 Corinthians 9:7

⁷*So let* each one *give* as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.

11. 1 Corinthians 4:1, 2

¹Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. ²Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.

Answer: Be found faithful.
