

The Christian Life Lesson 11 2Q 2009

Stewardship

SUNDAY

Read Matthew 25:14-30

¹⁴ “Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. ¹⁵ To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. ¹⁶ The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. ¹⁷ So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. ¹⁸ But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money.

¹⁹ “After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. ²⁰ The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.’

²¹ “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’

²² “The man with the two talents also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.’

²³ “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’

²⁴ “Then the man who had received the one talent came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. ²⁵ So I was afraid and went

out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.'

²⁶ "His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? ²⁷ Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.

²⁸ " 'Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. ²⁹ For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. ³⁰ And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Thoughts about this parable? What lessons do you see being taught?

- Who is the one going on a journey? Christ who left earth and went to heaven but will be coming back
- From where do our talents come?
- Does everyone start with the same number of talents? Why does one person have more talent than another? Who decides how many talents a person has? Is God in heaven determining how many talents each person has or are other factors involved?
 - Can God from heaven supply talents or abilities to persons which are not naturally endowed?
Samson's strength, Solomon's wisdom
 - Are some talents inherited? (abilities and wealth)
- What does it mean that a person, by investment, can multiply their talents? Does this apply only to money?
- Does the parable mean that only those with few talents can bury them?
- What happens to the man with five talents who buries them? If it is money then five talents will be there when he digs it up, but what if the talent buried is an ability?
- Why is talent taken from one and given to another?

- Is the critical issue involved how many talents you have or something else? What? What you do with the talents you have, which mean the focus is on character or the development of character.
- What prevented the man with one talent from investing his talent? His belief about the master, which was?
- Does God harvest where He has not sown or gather where He has not spread seed? Then why did Jesus describe it as such in the parable? He was giving the wicked servant's view! Does this give us a clue as to what underlies who is wicked and who is not?
- What did the war in heaven start over? Lies about God, what obstructs God's healing love in our lives? What sets us free?

Read bottom paragraph – “Reality number four...” thoughts?

Why is it serious business to not use one's talents? What does God do to those who refuse to use their talents for Him?

He eventually lets them go:

- Ephraim is joined to idols; leave him alone! Hosea 4:17
- Romans 1:18-34

Why does God let them go? The neural circuits we fire are the ones that grow, the neural circuits we leave idle are the ones that die. Thus, when we invest our energies in Godliness, through God's grace not only do our characters grow but our brains change. But when we invest our energies into wickedness, eventually we destroy the ability to recognize and respond to God, truth and love and thus God lets us go.

MONDAY

Read second paragraph “In today's stressful...” thoughts?

- Any thoughts on effective time management?
- What interferes with your ability to manage your time?

- Is it okay to turn down requests for ministry?
- Is it okay to take time off to relax and to have fun?
- What happens to the person who doesn't take time off?
- What about the Sabbath, how did Jesus "not miss the blessings of the Sabbath"?
 - What is the blessing of the Sabbath? Do you ever find that the idea of the blessings of the Sabbath is stated and assumed but rarely defined? How would you define the blessings of the Sabbath?
 - Did Jesus work on the Sabbath?
 - After healing the man at the pool of Bethesda the Jewish leaders confronted Him: So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jews persecuted him. ¹⁷ Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working." ¹⁸ For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God. John 5:16-18
 - What blessing did Jesus not miss on the Sabbath?

Read last paragraph – thoughts?

- The lesson states that "God has the first claim on our time. We manifest this in our keeping of the Sabbath and our daily time for prayer and worship."
 - Does this mean that all those who observe the Sabbath are manifesting that God is first in their lives? What about those who crucified Christ, why did they want Him down before sunset?
 - What about today? Can we be Sabbath observers and take time for prayer and worship and still not have God first in our lives?
 - If someone doesn't keep the Sabbath does that mean that we can know that God is not first in their lives?

- What do you think about the idea that what day one worships upon is the best evidence to determine whether someone has God first in their lives or not?
- Do you think it is helpful to use such things as which day we worship on to determine who is right with God and who is not?
- Why is it dangerous to use such practices?
- Does this mean that which day we worship upon is totally inconsequential and doesn't matter?
- Why does the day of worship matter, what difference does it make?
- What blessing do you receive from the Sabbath?
- Can the Sabbath become a cursing rather than a blessing? If so how and why?
- Does one have to attend church on Sabbath to keep the Sabbath holy?
- Are we to judge others based on their day of worship? I know some non-SDA Christians who attend church on Sunday but keep the Sabbath with their family each week.
- What is the day of worship not useful for?
Determining the heart relationship a particular person has with God.

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph – thoughts? Are we our own property? Why or why not?

The lesson suggests we read 1Cor 6:19,20:

- Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; ²⁰ you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

Thoughts? What does it mean? What do you think the lesson is suggesting? Is the lesson suggesting someone other than us is to be in charge of our bodies, is to be deciding what we do

with our bodies? In the Corinthians 6 text, after the Apostles says we are not our own we are bought with a price, who does the Apostle give the responsibility and authority to govern the body to? The believer! Who has God given authority to determine what you do with your body? You! Now, does that mean all decisions are healthy?

But what if someone prefers the position that God has bought us with a price and we are His property, or He is our Master?

- “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, ¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” Luke 4:18,19
- Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. ³⁵ Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. ³⁶ So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. John 8:34-36
- Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, ² because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. Romans 8:1,2

If the Master sets us free are we free or are we slaves? If the Master sets us free then who is in governance of our bodies, us or the Master?

How do we know we are free? Because we are not robots – God has the power to control our choices, but He doesn’t. When the Holy Spirit has His way in our lives we develop Godly traits of character known as fruits of the Spirit, the last one being “Self Control!” Why is this important? Love cannot exist if we are not free.

But if we use our freedom to indulge appetite what happens? The laws of health are not rescinded because God has given us

freedom to govern our own bodies. If you choose to drink, smoke, eat an unhealthy diet God doesn't send an angel down from heaven to ruin your liver, give you lung cancer or make you obese – these are the natural consequences to violating the laws of health.

And as we violate the laws of health we lose our freedom. A person with physical illness and disability is not as free as one who is healthy. A person with morbid obesity is not as free as one who is of normal weight. The chains of our slavery are self imposed as we choice to live in violation of the laws that God created the universe to run upon. And slowly we are enslaved and don't even realize it.

This is what Paul is talking about in Romans 6:16-23:

- Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? ¹⁷ But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. ¹⁸ You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness. ¹⁹ I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness. ²⁰ When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. ²¹ What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! ²² But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. ²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

To whom has God given governance of your body? Whose decision is it what you do with your body? Does your decision have real consequences?

Read third paragraph “But the basic idea...” thoughts?

Let’s read what Paul says immediately following his statement that our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, we are not are own but bought with a price. Read Romans 7:1-6

- Now for the matters you wrote about: It is good for a man not to marry. ² But since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband. ³ The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. ⁴ The wife’s body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband’s body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. ⁵ Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. ⁶ I say this as a concession, not as a command.

Does this add any light on the subject of our body not being our own? What does it mean? Does it mean your spouse is in governance of your body? Does it mean your spouse determines what you do with your body? Or does it mean when you gave yourself in marriage you gave your spouse access to your body and you promised to honor your spouse with your entire self, including your body? But who still decides to fulfill the promise? How is this connected to the body being a Temple of the Holy Spirit we are not our own?

Who determines whether the Holy Spirit will dwell in you? Christ stands at the door and knocks, who determines whether He comes in?

WEDNESDAY

Read second paragraph “Fact number one...” thoughts?

- How do you like the way the lesson expressed it, “God owns everything”? It is true that God created everything and is “rightful owner” But does being rightful owner sound the same as “God owns everything”? Is there a difference? Does the rightful owner have the ability to give or share or delegate or endow or surrender abilities, authorities, ownership? Does God do this?
- Did God give Adam dominion, rulership of planet earth? Did Adam “own” planet earth? No, but was Adam supposed to govern planet earth by the “free” exercise of his God given abilities, in harmony with God’s principles of love? Or was Adam to suspend his abilities and wait for God to give him daily instructions on what Adam was to do each day?
- Does God give us the right to decide what we do with ourselves ultimately deciding whether we will be saved or lost?
- When Christ comes again does He share His throne with the redeemed? What does this mean?
- On Earth does God’s ownership of a farm determine whether that farm will produce a bountiful harvest? Does God’s ownership determine whether poppies or marijuana will be grown? If God is the owner should we hold Him responsible for the misuse of His property?

Read third paragraph “Fact number two...” thoughts?

- What happens if, when you sit down to write out your bills you write out the bills first and tithe and offerings last? Does God care? Do you get a smaller blessing? Do you get a cursing? What if you write your tithes and offerings last because you want to see how much is left

over after your bills so you can increase the size of your offering?

- While the tithe is God's the offerings are free will, expression of our love and thanks. Would God prefer we give all our money to Him each week and not pay our bills?

Read last paragraph "Fact number four..."

- What does it mean the more we give the more we are blessed?
- Why is this true? It is the law of love, the design template upon which the universe is built
- But why is it true only if we give in order to give and not give in order to get?

THURSDAY

Read first two paragraphs – thoughts?

- What does it mean Jesus will ask for an account? Why will Jesus ask for this?
- Why does God say we should have no other gods before Him? Is it because He will punish us if we do? Or is it because we become like the god we worship and as the highest created beings on planet earth there is nothing on earth we can worship and actually grow and develop. Every false god we worship causes us to degrade. God says to worship Him because He wants our ultimate good, health and happiness.
- Is this why Jesus asks for an account? Not because He is concerned about His "credit sheet" but because He is concerned about us, our healthy, maturity, development and if we fail to invest what He has given us we will suffer the consequences. Is He asking for an account to help, even the lost to realize, they are lost by their own choice not because God is mad or angry or out to get them but by the result of their own self destruction?

FRIDAY

Read second paragraph – thoughts?

Read and discuss questions 1 and 2