



2023 1Q Managing for the Master Till He Comes—Lesson 4 Offerings for Jesus

by Tim Jennings

SUNDAY

Last week we discussed tithing, this week we explore the question of offerings.

Any questions about offerings? How about this:

- Since God created everything (Genesis 1)
- Since everything already belongs to the Lord (Deuteronomy 10:14)
- Since all things are sustained by Him (Hebrews 1:3)
- Since He holds all things together (Colossians 1:17)
- And since God has said, “If I were hungry, I would not ask you for food, for the world and everything in it is mine” (Psalms 50:12 GNT).

Then why are we to return tithe and give offerings? This is not a question of what those funds are to be used for, we answered last week that the tithe is to be used to advance the gospel, the kingdom of God. No, this question is why does God instruct us to return tithe and give offerings—does He need it?

What are the two primary antagonistic principles at war between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan?

Love versus selfishness

And what is the natural orientation of our heart as we are born into the world? We are bent toward selfishness and would be hopelessly lost to selfishness if it wasn't for God's grace intervening in our hearts to convict us of a better way, to draw us back, to lead us away from sin, to make us dissatisfied with selfishness and bring us to conversion. This is why salvation is more than being born into the world, we must also be reborn into God's kingdom of love. Which means the bent of our internal self, our inmost hearts drives, shifts from selfishness to love, we are still capable of being tempted by selfishness but the converted person doesn't identify with or desire to be selfish, doesn't justify selfishness, but grieves when they stumble and longs to be free of selfishness.

So, understanding that we have a bent toward selfishness, which is driven by fear and the desire to make self safe, and we need to be reborn into God's kingdom of love and then grow in love, why do you think God has instructed us to return tithe and give offerings?

To exercise both faith and love—to help us open the channels of our selfish hearts to give and the Bible says the more you give the more you will receive.



This doesn't sound right to the selfish world; it sounds like foolishness to them. The world teaches you get more by taking and hoarding and have less by giving. And the world frightens people into hoarding and not giving by focusing on shortages, catastrophes, and seeks to break down families and communities that support each other so that fear increases.

But God teaches we get more when we give, how is that possible?

First, is God's promise primarily about receiving stuff if we give or about something else? Is God's promise about increasing earthly treasures—stocks, bonds, gold, silver, lands, houses, or increasing heavenly treasures—fruits of righteousness, peace, love, joy, faith, godliness, honesty, integrity, wisdom, discernment, Christlikeness, and maturity? What is it that heaven treasures material wealth, or Christlikeness of character? Then what do you think God wants to primarily pour upon us, to give us more of, stuff, or the attributes of Himself, the principles and practices of heaven?

Jesus said:

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:19–21 NIV84).

What do you think it means? How do we store up treasure in heaven? Notice how Luke recorded these instructions—he added some details:

Then Jesus said to his disciples: “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?

“Consider how the lilies grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.

“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Luke 12:22-34 NIV84).



- Do you see how the world inflames our fear of not having, and seeks to get us to be more selfishness by creating situations in which people are in need?
- How much is peace of mind worth?
- How much is peace of heart worth?
- How much is good health worth?
- How much is living a life of love and trust worth?
- How much is being useful to God and fulfilling His purpose, knowing your life matters, knowing that through you God's kingdom advances and your life makes a difference for good?
- How much is reconciliation with God and eternal life worth?
- And how are we able to experience peace of mind and heart, live lives of love and trust, fulfill God's purpose? Is it by our initiative, our creativity, our strength, our innate abilities—or is it by receiving what God has provided to us through Jesus and sharing that love, joy, wisdom, energy, time, money, food, clothing, with others?

Consider the garden hose on your house and the fire hydrant on the street in front of your house. If you open both of them up full blast, which gives more water away? The fire hydrant—and in so doing which receives more water to it?

We are the metaphorical hose or fire hydrant. God is the municipal infinite source of water, as we allow the love of God to flow through us to others we receive more of God's love flowing into us. The more love we give away, the more we receive from God!

Jesus told the woman at the well,

“whoever drinks some of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again, but the water that I will give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up” (John 4:14 NET).

There is a song by Michael. W. Smith called *Give it Away* and these are the lyrics:

*She asked him for forever
And a promise that would last
He said, "Babe, you know I love you
But I can't commit to that"
She said, "Love isn't love
Till You give it away"*

*A father lived in silence
Saw his son become a man
There was a distance felt between them
'Cause he could not understand
That love isn't love
Till you give it away*



You gotta give it away

*As we live
Moving side by side
May we learn to give
(May we learn to give)
Learn to sacrifice*

*We can entertain compassion
For a world in need of care
But the road of good intentions
Doesn't lead to anywhere
'Cause love isn't love
Till you give it away, yeah
You gotta give it away*

*As we live
Moving side by side
May we learn to give
(May we learn to give)
Learn to sacrifice*

*Love is like a river
Flowing down from the Giver of life
We drink from the water
And our thirst is no longer denied
You gotta give it away*

*As we live
Moving side by side
(Moving side by side)
May we learn to give
(May, may, may we learn to give)
Learn to sacrifice*

*There was a man who walked on water
He came to set the people free
He was the ultimate example
Of what love can truly be
'Cause His love was His life
And He gave it away
You gotta give it away*

As we live



*Moving side by side
May we learn to give
(May, may we learn to give)
Learn to sacrifice*

You gotta give it away

This is the purpose of God in providing us the privilege of tithing and giving offerings, to help us grow in love for God and others and strengthen our faith/trust in Him. God wants us to grow and mature in godliness. We do this by practicing His methods, so He wants us to regularly make decisions that are contrary to the practices of the world, to regularly exercise our ability to live out God's law of love and to exercise our faith in God, to say no to fear, no to selfishness and yes to the kingdom of God.

But, let me be clear—it isn't about the act of giving, it is about the motive of giving. A person can give from a selfish motive, a guilt motive, a fear motive, a resentful and bitter motive, a political motive and if a person gives from such motives they will grow more selfish, bitter, fearful, or resentful.

This is why the Lord loves a *cheerful* giver, not merely a giver (2 Corinthians 9:7).

So, with this in mind, that God gave us the practice of tithing and giving offerings as therapy for our souls, a therapeutic tool or practice to help us resist the infection of fear and selfishness and help us open the rusted channels in our hearts where love is to flow, and help us grow in godliness, understanding all of this, what is the offering that is the most important that we are to bring to God, the offering that He wants most?

- “Certainly you do not want a sacrifice, or else I would offer it; you do not desire a burnt sacrifice. The sacrifices God desires are a humble spirit—O God, a humble and repentant heart you will not reject” (Psalm 51:16-17 NET).
- “What I want from you is plain and clear: I want your constant love, not your animal sacrifices. I would rather have my people know me than burn offerings to me” (Hosea 6:5-6 GNT).
- “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will” (Romans 12:1-2 NIV84).

What is the first and primary offering we are to bring to God? Ourselves! Only after we have given ourselves to God, can we bring other offerings that are pleasing, because only with renewed hearts will our giving be cheerful and be therapeutic in God's design law kingdom to help us grow to be more like Jesus.



Does that mean a person is not to give anything until they are first converted? **It means what God wants is us not stuff.**

In the process of conversion, an individual may be moved by the Holy Spirit with motives to give to certain causes and those motives of love, compassion, desire to bless and help are evidence of God's Spirit working upon the heart even before full conversion. So God would absolutely want such a person to follow those motives and give as they are responding to the work of the Holy Spirit in their life. And in doing they will gradually be drawn closer to God and will experience conversion.

So anyone, regardless of their conversion status who experience compassion for others, the motives of love, altruism, and is convicted to give to help others should do so, it is part of God's plan moving in the living being to strengthen the spiritual attributes of His kingdom in the person and bring them ultimately to full conversion.

But beware, Satan perverts tithing and the giving of offerings. Satan understands the issue isn't the amount given but the motive in giving. He perverted the OT animal sacrifices and offerings to be viewed as appeasement. He got them to think God would be happier with thousands of slain animals and flowing rivers of blood. And they brought these expensive offerings, but what happened? They ended up killing Jesus.

If Satan can get people to give from fear, from guilt, from obligation, from legal requirement, from a business contract, from selfishness, because they are afraid of God, because they are trying to buy God off, pay for their sins, alleviate their own guilt, if Satan can get people to give from any reason other than godly love, then even the act of giving can be used to corrupt the soul and undermine trust in God.

Consider this story from Scripture:

To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Luke 18:9–14 NIV84).

Is it only about giving, or does the motive matter?

Read third paragraph:

Our offerings are an evidence of our willingness to self-sacrifice for God. They can be a deeply spiritual experience, an expression of the fact that our lives are wholly surrendered to God as



our Lord. To us, as an English idiom says, it is “putting our money where our mouth is.” You can say you love God, but generous offerings help reveal (and even strengthen) that love. (2023 1Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide page 31).

Thoughts? Do the first and second sentences sound just a little different than the first sentence?

“Our offerings **are an evidence** of our willingness to self-sacrifice for God” versus “They **can be a deeply spiritual experience**”?

Would it be slightly more accurate to say, Our offers *can be* an evidence, rather than *are* an evidence?

Maybe I am being too picky, but I think for many legalists, the act is what matters rather than the motive and thus, if you give, you have fulfilled your legal requirement and thus the giving is the evidence. People like to think this way, just like the Pharisees Jesus was addressing in the text above, because they can do things to make themselves feel good about themselves while they retain a selfish and unconverted heart.

So, I don't think I am being too picky here, I think the motive is really more important than the act and focusing only on the act can perhaps interfere with some people experiencing true conversion.

The lesson seems to validate this concern in the next paragraph which reads,

An offering comes from a heart that trusts in a personal God who constantly provides for our needs as He sees best. Our offerings rest on the conviction that we have found assurance of salvation in Christ. They are not an appeasement or a search for God's acceptance. Rather, our offerings flow from a heart that has accepted Christ by faith as the only and sufficient means of grace and redemption. (2023 1Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide page 31).

So I very much like the lesson included this paragraph, because it is the motive that matters more than the act. But, **once the motive is correct the actions are necessary to solidify the right motive into the character**, to change the wiring of the brain, to establish the new motive as the automatic and engrained pattern of living.

MONDAY

Read Deuteronomy 16:17:

“Each of you must bring a gift in proportion to the way the LORD your God has blessed you” (Deuteronomy 16:17 NIV84).

What does this text mean to you? Does it apply to us or only to ancient Israel? Is this to be taken literal or metaphorical? How literal?



- If your dog gives birth to a litter of puppies do you donate one of the puppies to the church? Or, do you follow the instructions God gave Israel of the first born sheep and sacrifice the firstborn puppy and burn the body on an altar? How literal do we take these instructions?
- If the Lord has blessed you with children, do you, like Hannah, take one of your children and leave them with church leaders to raise?

Is the instruction in Deuteronomy a rule or a principle? And what is the principle? The principle is love. God wants His people to experience more of His goodness, more of His love, more of His healing and transforming power and ultimately eternal life. So God directs His people how to participate in His kingdom. Jesus said it this way: “Freely you have received, freely give” (Matthew 10:8 NIV84).

The lesson quotes Jesus saying the following:

“For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required” (Luke 12:48 NKJV).

What does this mean?

This quote is plucked out of a parable Jesus told, perhaps it would help us to read the entire parable:

The Lord answered, “Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns. I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. But suppose the servant says to himself, ‘My master is taking a long time in coming,’ and he then begins to beat the menservants and maidservants and to eat and drink and get drunk. The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers.

“That servant who knows his master’s will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.”

“I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is completed! Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division. From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.” (Luke 12:42-53 NIV84).



What is the lesson? What is Jesus describing? Who are the managers or stewards? What does it mean for the Lord's managers to berate and neglect and abuse? Did you see this being fulfilled during the last three years and how some church leaders rather than protecting their flock from abuse and coercion of conscience, aligned with governments around the world to coerce consciences?

What does it mean to be beaten with many or few blows? This text is often used by the imperialists, those who wrongly believe that God's law works like human law, that God will be required to inflict punishment for disobedience, so how do we explain this text?

And how do we understand Jesus saying He didn't come to bring peace but division? Isn't He the Prince of Peace?

Is this passage difficult to understand and explain?

What law lens are we reading through? What is our understanding of the natural state of humanity after Adam sinned? Selfish—and with whom do sinners naturally align if not for the intervention of God? They align with Satan and practice his methods. Thus, Jesus did not come to bring peace with sin and selfishness but to divide, to cut away sin and selfishness, to pull people out of pain, suffering, sin-sickness, and corruption and into peace, health, happiness and eternal life. **He cannot provide eternal life to people who refuse to leave sinfulness behind.** Thus, we must separate from the cause of pain and death, which is sin.

From *The Remedy*:

Jesus gave this answer. "Who then is an intelligent and wise manager — one qualified to share the Remedy effectively in order to nurture the master's staff? It will be the most awesome experience for that aide when the master returns to find them reliably doing so. Truly, that aide will be trusted with all the master possesses. But what if the master's aide is self-centered and says to himself, 'The master has been gone a long time, and who knows when he will return?' and rather than nurturing the staff, they berate, abuse and mislead them, and then go and use the master's resources to party with gluttons and drunkards? That aide will be totally surprised, caught completely unaware, on the day their master returns. The master will let that wicked servant go, cutting their relationship and casting them out with all the other counterfeits and frauds who have peddled false remedies.

"The aide who understands the Master — his design, the problem being addressed, and how to apply the Remedy — and either doesn't heed his instructions or applies a false remedy will suffer many blows: a guilty conscience, warped character, damaged reason, broken relationships and ultimately, a destroyed soul. But the one who doesn't know about the Remedy or how to apply it and therefore doesn't share it, or applies a false remedy will suffer few blows—regret, disappointment, and grief. The more you are given, the more you possess to share with others; the greater your abilities, the more gifts you have to give away.



"I have come to ignite the fire of truth and love upon the earth, and oh how I wish it were already an inferno! But I have a mission to complete, and the pressure on me to complete it is overwhelming. Do you think I have come to make peace with this selfish world? Absolutely not! I have not come to make peace with selfishness but to cut selfishness out of the hearts of people. From now on, those who choose the Remedy will cut dysfunctional family ties, and a family of five will be divided — two against three and three against two. Love will free a son from selfish loyalty to his father's ambitions and feuds, and a father from the selfish exploits of his son; love will sever a daughter from the control of an oppressive and manipulative mother, and a mother from the selfish demands of her daughter; love will cut through the fear and hostility a daughter-in-law has toward her mother-in-law, and mother-in-law toward daughter-in-law." (Luke 12:42-53 REM).

Do you see how design law clarifies this and makes it so easy to understand, but more than that? Do you see how reading this through the lens of God's design law causes our love, admiration, reverence, respect, and trust in God to grow?

The lesson asks us to read Psalms 116:12-14:

How can I repay the LORD
for all his goodness to me?
I will lift up the cup of salvation
and call on the name of the LORD.
I will fulfill my vows to the LORD
in the presence of all his people. (Psalm 116:12-14 NIV84).

What does this text mean to you?

Can we repay the Lord? Not in some way that is legal, or in some way that covers the expense of what the Lord has done. So if we think in human terms we can never repay the Lord.

But if you think about what God wants as a return from us for His sacrifice, for His investment in us, what do you think? What would make God say, "it was worth it" and make God say, "well done" to us, is there something we can do to repay the Lord in this way?

We can give Him our love, our trust, our loyalty, our faithfulness, our energy, time, our lives in service of His kingdom, which spreads the gospel and plants the seeds of truth into other hearts which the Spirit waters bringing more people back to God. How much would you cherish and feel it was worth it if your sacrifice resulted in saving one of your children from death, but in so doing your child responds by sharing the remedy that saved them with your other dying children and in turn they were also saved?

So this is how I rendered it in the Remedy:

What can I give to the Lord



for all the goodness he has given to me?
I will carry to others his remedy to save them
and proclaim God's healing character of love.
I will keep my promise to the Lord
to share his remedy with all the nations. (Psalm 116:12-14 REM).

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph,

“The Bible does not give us an order of service for worship. But it appears that at least four things are present in worship services. In the New Testament this list includes study/preaching, prayer, music, and tithes and offerings.” (2023 1Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide page 33).

If you were to practice worshiping like the New Testament Christians, those who accepted Jesus and came together to worship God after the crucifixion, what might that look like?

I am going to list a list of worship practices. Some are from the Bible describing the New Testament church in worship and some are from the pagan cult worship practices of the first century, and some are from both. I want you to tell me, which are from Christianity and which are from pagan cult worship:

- Meeting in some type of a temple, church building or professional worship center—pagan
- Meeting in nature or someone's home—the early church
- Having a professional paid speaker give an inspiring sermon to an observing audience—pagan
- Having a group discussion led by someone understood to be more spiritually mature—early church
- Having an elevated pulpit for the speaker—pagan
- Having a division between the priesthood and laity—pagan
- Celebrating Christmas and Easter—pagan
- Worshiping together on Sunday—pagan
- Collecting offerings during worship service—pagan
- Worship leaders who dress in exclusive and distinct clothing that distinguishes them from the non-religious leaders—pagan
- Every member having a role, spontaneity, freedom, little regulated structure, open discussion—the early church

Where did today's order of worship originate—the New Testament and first century Christian practices or the Catholic mass? The order of worship that most Protestants practice originated in the Catholic mass, not the new testament church. What we do here, with our open discussion, ability for any member to ask questions, and have conversational study of Scripture is much more closely how the early church worshipped.



One of the founders of the SDA church wrote the following, about worship as we approach the second coming of Christ, do you agree or not? And if you agree what would the benefit be?

There should be less preaching and more teaching. There are those who want more definite light than they receive from hearing the sermons. Some need a longer time than do others to understand the points presented. If the truth presented could be made a little plainer, they would see it and take hold of it, and it would be like a nail fastened in a sure place.

It has been shown me that our camp meetings are to increase in interest and success. **As we approach nearer the end, I have seen that in these meetings there will be less preaching and more Bible study.** There will be little groups all over the ground with their Bibles in their hands, **and different ones leading out in a free, conversational study of the Scriptures**” (Testimonies to the Church volume 6, p. 87).

This description of little groups having conversational studies of the Scripture is how the early church worshipped, except they had few copies of the Scriptures.

WEDNESDAY

The lesson asks us to read Mark 21:41-44:

Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.” (Mark 12:41-44 NIV84).

What are the lessons you derive from this story?

What is more important to God, the amount of the gift, or the motive of the heart?

What about to whom the gift was given? Did that matter? For the purpose of the giver it matters what they believe about the organization and purpose of the gift they are giving.

Read the first two paragraphs,

Jesus and His disciples were in the temple courtyard where the treasury chests were located, and He watched those who were bringing their gifts. He was close enough to see that a widow had given two copper coins. She had put in all that she had. “But Jesus understood her motive. She believed the service of the temple to be of God’s appointment, and she was anxious to do her utmost to sustain it. She did what she could, and her act was to be a monument to her memory through all time, and her joy in eternity. Her heart went with her gift; its value was



estimated, not by the worth of the coin, but by the love to God and the interest in His work that had prompted the deed.” — Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 175.

Another very significant point is that this is the only gift Jesus ever commended — a gift to a church that was just about to reject Him, a church that greatly deviated from its calling and mission. (2023 1Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide page 34).

Was the organization she was donating to actively advancing the true gospel or working against it?

Jesus twice overthrows their money tables and drives out the greedy false leaders and tells them they are misrepresenting God.

Yet, this woman didn't know it. She believed that the money was going to be used in the service of God and God recognized her sincerity and she experienced His blessing in her heart and mind and growth in godly character.

However, aren't we also told that Jesus disciples carried a money bag to use in helping people? What if this woman had had more information, perhaps had observed Jesus overturning the money tables, perhaps had a brother who was one of the deceitful priests and she knew the corruption and misuse of funds going on, perhaps she had listened to Jesus and was convicted that He was the Messiah and therefore she gave her two mites to His disciples instead of the collection box at the Temple—if she had done that would she have been wrong? Would she have experienced less of a blessing? Would she have been going against God's will? Or would she have had an even greater blessing because not only would she be giving from a faithful and loving heart, but her gift would more directly support the true gospel, and she would have had greater understanding, insight, appreciation of God's will, principles, methods, kingdom and would have been able to share the true message of Jesus with others.

THURSDAY

The lesson asks us to read the story recorded in Mark 14:3-9:

While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head.

Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, “Why this waste of perfume? It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor.” And they rebuked her harshly.

“Leave her alone,” said Jesus. “Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached



throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.” (Mark 14:3-9 NIV84).

What lessons do we take from this story?

- Why did some criticize her?
- Whose heart motives were right?
- What did Jesus value?
- Would she have been wrong if she had chosen instead of using the money on ointment to anoint Jesus to instead give it to the disciples to distribute to the poor?
- Were the critics wrong for recognizing the money could have been used in another way?
- Were the critics wrong in bringing up the fact the money could have been used in another way? Why?
- What if they were sincerely interested in blessing others and they were simply frustrated seeing so many people still in need and they simply wanted to use this money to help others—if their motive would have been sincere and not selfish, would it then have been right to criticize this woman’s use of the money? Why or why not?
- Does Romans 14 apply here, every person is to be fully persuaded in their own mind?
- Who is responsible for deciding where to donate the funds and resource they have in their possession?
- So it wasn’t the place of others to determine the motive, reasons, or leading of the Holy Spirit upon another person in how they worship God or return offerings to God. So, even if their motives were good, it was wrong for them to publicly criticize this woman and question her donation. Thoughts?

While in God’s kingdom people are to freely decide where to return their tithes and offerings, are there people active in Christ’s day and active in our day that make it their goal to get people to donate without the person investigating or considering what the organization stands for, or how the funds are being used?

Jesus said, “Watch out for the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted in the marketplaces, and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. They devour widows’ houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished most severely.” (Mark 12:38-49 NIV84).

What does it mean they devour widows’ houses? Does it suggest taking the wealth of the vulnerable? And don’t you think they did so under the guise of advancing God’s kingdom?

Jesus said to those religious leaders:

“You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions! For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.’ But you say that if a man says to his father or mother: ‘Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is Corban’ (that is, a gift devoted



to God), then you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother. Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that.” (Mark 7:9-13 NIV84).

What is the lesson?

FRIDAY

Read first paragraph:

The heavenly record book of remembrance also notes the financial faithfulness of God’s family members. “The recording angel makes a faithful record of every offering dedicated to God and put into the treasury, and also of the final result of the means thus bestowed. The eye of God takes cognizance of every farthing devoted to His cause, and of the willingness or reluctance of the giver. The motive in giving is also chronicled. Those self-sacrificing, consecrated ones who render back to God the things that are His, as He requires of them, will be rewarded according to their works. Even though the means thus consecrated be misapplied, so that it does not accomplish the object which the donor had in view, — the glory of God and the salvation of souls, — those who made the sacrifice in sincerity of soul, with an eye single to the glory of God, will not lose their reward.” — Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 2, p. 518. (2023 1Q SDA Adult Bible Study Guide page 36).

What does this mean? Is this literal accounting, list of deeds or amounts of donations, or is this symbolic of something else?

What is recorded in the heavenly records? Names, and names represent what? Character, and what happens in a person’s character when they are honest, loyal, faithful, true, generous, when they give? What happens in a person’s character when they lie, cheat, and exploit?

And what is the reward and what is the punishment?

Read and discuss questions