

Sabbath School Lesson #8 – Planning for Success – 18-24 February 2023

Christ would have us understand what planning for success means. Paul says, “And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ” (Colossians 3:23-24). Success in life resides only in the Gospel. The Gospel of God is not a narrow, circumscribed thing which can be bound off by creeds, as many people seem to think. The Gospel includes everything that pertains to the life of man. By its provisions a man is born again, – becomes a new creature in Christ. Consequently, his life as a Christian knows nothing that is not in touch with that creative power. For this reason, the Apostle Paul wrote to his brethren in the church, “Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31). And to the Colossian brethren he wrote, “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.” “And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men” (Colossians 3:17, 23). The Gospel, therefore, touches our eating and drinking, and every occupation and act of life, be it business or pleasure. It makes every act a spiritual act, done with a view to the glory of God. The Christian life is a spiritual life. It is the life of Christ in human flesh, – in the individual who has put on Christ (see Galatians 2:20; 1 John 4:2). And this does not make life a restricted thing, separated from the world around us; for all things were created by God, and intended to be used for the benefit and pleasure of man. It separates only from sin. It shows man how to use aright all things that creation affords. It reveals the spiritual aspect of all things, so that in everything God has made or ordained the individual can find Him, and that life and strength and peace which He has to bestow. It obliterates the distinction that men have set up between religion and business, making the service of God the proper business of man, by showing man how to serve God in all his business, and how to find in it all a higher pleasure than any the world has to bestow. In matters of business and finances, what lies at the foundation of true success? “That which lies at the foundation of business integrity and of true success is the recognition of God's ownership. The Creator of all things, He is the original proprietor. We are His stewards. All that we have is a trust from Him, to be used according to His direction” EG White {Ed 137.4}.

Sunday: First Things First – What do you say to a professed Seventh-day Adventist who is in employment that require him to violate Sabbath-keeping, who say, ‘I would like to always keep the Sabbath, but my employer will not let me’ or that ‘I could not live if I were to always keep the Sabbath’? It is the result of failing to put ‘first things first.’ This excuse is offered alike by those who are in prosperous business, and those who labour for their daily bread. How do you know that you could not live? Are there not thousands who are keeping the Sabbath, and do they not live? Let us consider this matter further. You say you cannot live if you keep the Sabbath. Are you sure that you can if you do not keep it? Have you any guarantee that your life will be continued indefinitely? Do those who violate God's law live any longer on an average than those who keep it? You certainly know of no one who is not subject to death. The psalmist says: “What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?” (Psalm 89:48). “It is appointed unto men once to die” (Hebrews 9:27), and this without any distinction regarding age or belief. Then why do you assume that you will be exempt if you do not keep the Sabbath. ‘But,’ our friend will doubtless reply, ‘I expect, of course, to die sometime in the natural course of events, whether I keep the Sabbath or not; what I mean is, that I shall not be able to earn a living for myself and family.’ Well, you profess to believe the Bible; let us see what it says regarding this matter. “Therefore take no [anxious] thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (for after all these things do the Gentiles seek) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:31-33). Could any promise be plainer than this? If it does not mean just what it says, it does not mean anything. And God is fully able to fulfil this promise. Just consider what a vast estate He has. Here is a description of it: “For every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains; and the

wild beasts of the field are Mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee; for the world is Mine, and the fulness thereof" (Psalm 50:10-12). Surely you need have no fear of starving if you serve such a Master as that. If we put 'first things first', if we put God first, He will care for us.

Monday: The Blessing of Work (Ideally) – What is the significance of the fact that, even before the entrance of sin, Adam (and certainly Eve, too) was given work? In Eden, man was given work to do, but it was not wearisome. After sin, work became wearisome; "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread" (Genesis 3:19), man was told. Work is not a part of the curse, but weariness from work is. If man had not fallen, he would have had work to do throughout eternity, but he would never have known anything of weariness. Even after sin, where man works through weariness, working is still a blessing. "Let no one be ashamed of work; for honest toil is ennobling. While the hands are engaged in the most common tasks, the mind may be filled with high and holy thoughts. Work is a blessing, not a curse. Diligent labour keeps many, young and old, from the snares of him who "finds some mischief still for idle hands to do." {PrT November 14, 1901, par. 6}. "God never designed that man should live in idleness. Those who are always busy, who go cheerfully about the performance of their daily tasks are the most happy and healthy. At night sleep brings to their wearied frames unbroken slumber, preparing mind and body for the duties of the coming day" {PrT November 14, 1901, par. 7}. "The Lord knew what was necessary for man's happiness when He gave him work to do. The promise of future glory and the decree that man must toil for his daily bread came from the same throne" – EG White {PrT November 14, 1901, par. 8}.

Tuesday: The Earning Years – What do you say to one who reads Matthew 6:25, and says 'it is wrong for me to work for my living; God knows what I need, and He will see that I am provided for, if I only exercise faith, and do not try to do anything for myself'? Simply this: He has been too hasty in his conclusion and has not taken into the account that other inspired declaration that, "if any would not work, neither should eat" (2 Thessalonians 3:10); "Let him that stole steal no more; but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth" (Ephesians 4:28). "We beseech you, brethren, ... that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you: that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing" (1 Thessalonians 4:10-12); "But if any provide not for his own, and, specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (1 Timothy 5:8). Now, is there any lack of harmony between these texts and Matthew 6:25? Not a particle. "But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God; for is He that giveth thee power to get wealth" (Deuteronomy 8:18). Read the context, from the 10th verse onward, and you will see that all the texts which we have quoted are bound together. Men are to work with their hands for their support; but they are still to give the credit to God, because He gives them the power and the opportunity to labour. If God gives a man the ability to work, and then orders circumstances so that he has an opportunity to work, the honour belongs to God. It is that God supports us. And knowing that "the Lord will provide," we are not to worry and fret over the future, as though the Lord had no interest in helping us.

Wednesday: Working With Integrity – Are you working with integrity? "An honest man, according to Christ's measurement, is one who will manifest unbending integrity. Deceitful weights and false balances, with which many seek to advance their interests in the world, are abomination in the sight of God. Yet many who profess to keep the commandments of God are dealing with false weights and false balances" – Ellen G White {4T 310.2}.

Thursday: Seeking Godly Counsel – Where can we find Godly counsel? From God. "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me into glory" (Psalm 73:24). God's counsel, if followed, leads to glory. The Lord says: "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure" (Isaiah 46:10). "I will instruct thee in the way which thou shalt go; I will counsel thee with Mine eye upon thee" (Psalm 32:8). He will ensure our going in the right way, and having success here and hereafter, provided we will but submit to His counsel. We must avoid the counsel of the ungodly; "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners" (Psalm 1:1-3). It comes to nothing, for the ungodly are "like the chaff, which the wind driveth away" (verses 4-6). The counsel which proceeds from the ungodly, no matter how plausible it seems, is nothing but utter deception.