

VISITING PROGRAM TRAINING CLASS

Seventh Class

December 15, 1968

FORMAT:

1. Open with prayer.
2. World news discussion and drill (5-8 minutes).
3. Difficult scripture drill (30 minutes).
4. Sermonettes and evaluations (30 minutes).
5. Recess (10 minutes).
6. Lecture (one hour).
7. Assignments for next class.

DIFFICULT SCRIPTURES

I. Did Jesus say a rich man would never enter the Kingdom of God (Matt. 19:23)?

- A. He did not say that. He said it was very difficult for a rich man to enter God's Kingdom.
- B. Christ was referring to the example He had just given (Verses 16-22) where a rich young man turned down a calling to help preach the Gospel because he did not want to give up his wealth. In the parallel account (Mark 10:24) Christ emphasized that it was trusting in riches that would keep a rich man out of the Kingdom.
- C. Paul showed that the love of money could keep a man from entering the Kingdom of God (I Tim. 6:10). Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare (Verse 9). They become lustful. The more they get the more they want. Soon they are more intent on getting riches than striving to enter the Kingdom of God. It becomes their god (Col. 3:5).

Christians are to flee the lust of wealth and concentrate on living a godly life and striving to lay hold on eternal life. A Christian can't serve God and mammon -- a Greek word meaning wealth or riches (Matt. 6:24).

Jesus said where your treasure is, there will your heart be also (Matt. 6:21). A man will either direct his efforts to increasing and maintaining his material wealth or to serving God.

- D. God is not opposed to wealth. His desire is that we prosper (III John 2).

Many of God's servants were wealthy. Joseph was a prosperous man (Gen. 39:2). Job was the greatest man in the East (Job 1:3) Abram was rich in cattle silver and gold (Gen. 13:2).

These men were wealthy, but they did not put their trust in riches, nor seek their own blessings. They obeyed God and were blessed materially by Him, and they will be in God's Kingdom.

II. Does God allow you to borrow from your second tithe if you pay it back and add 20 percent (Lev. 27:31)?

A. First of all, this scripture does not say anything about borrowing from your tithes. Secondly this scripture is not talking about second tithe. Notice -- the scripture says all the tithe of the land is holy to God (Verse 30). This tithe belongs to God. Second tithe belongs to the individual for the purpose of observing God's annual Feasts (Deut. 14:22-26).

B. God says ten percent of a person Vs. crops and fruit belongs to Him (Lev. 27:30). In ancient Israel most of the people were engaged in farming. Therefore, most of the tithes were in the form of crops, fruit or livestock.

C. Often the individual would have a fruit tree and because of the excellent quality of fruit, he would want all of it for seed purposes. Because it was of a perishable nature anyway and often would spoil before the individual could turn it in as tithe, God permitted the farmer to keep it and pay the market value of the fruit plus 20 percent of its value. This did not apply to livestock. No tithe of the herd could be redeemed (Lev. 27:32-33).

D. Since we do not live in an agrarian society today, a Christian farmer may redeem (convert) the tithe of his land and herd and send it to God's Work.

III. Did Christ tell us to make friends of the world through unrighteous mammon (Luke 16:9)?

A. Christ was referring to the parable of the unjust steward which He had just given. Here the Lord commended the unjust steward for the worldly wisdom (shrewdness) he used in making himself friends through money (Verse 8). He went on to say the children of the world have more worldly wisdom than do Christians.

B. Christ told His disciples to make friends through the use of unrighteous mammon. Christians should give generously in offerings to God's Work.

These offerings enable many others to hear God's truth and become converted. They thus become our brethren -- our friends.

- C. When Christ comes to set up His Kingdom, material wealth will not be of value to us. At that time, those who have become converted through this Work for which we sacrificed financially, and who we perhaps have never seen till then, will greet us with joy and thanksgiving in God's Kingdom as spirit beings.

HOW TO MANAGE YOUR FINANCES GOD'S WAY

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF MANAGING YOUR FINANCES GOD'S WAY

God is working out His purpose of bringing billions of sons into His Family to share in the rulership of the universe. In this life we are developing the character and mind of God which we need in order to fulfill our future responsibilities. We must learn to put God first in every area of our lives. Today we are going to look at a major area of our lives which will, to a large degree, determine our position and reward in God's Kingdom -- and for some of us may determine whether we will BE in God's Kingdom! This is the area of our personal finances. How we manage our finances is vitally important to God. He is very concerned about how we spend our MONEY!

Luke 16:10-11 -- God expressly states that what we do with the comparatively small amount of wealth He allows us in this physical life shows what we would do with the vast power, authority and wealth we would inherit as His sons in ruling the universe! This is one of the major areas of our lives in which we are being tested, evaluated, and judged every day by Jesus Christ (I Pet. 4:17).

Matthew 6:21 -- Just as our faith is demonstrated by our works, we demonstrate whether or not our hearts are in God's Work by how we spend our money.

Any of us who takes lightly the serious responsibility of properly managing our finances takes lightly what God has in store for us. Managing our finances God's way will help us QUALIFY for a position of authority in God's Kingdom. Failure to do so may DISQUALIFY us for ANY position! Many in the Church of God, by the way they manage their finances -- by the way they scrimp on offerings and spend their money for material things -- show their hearts are on the material things of this world rather than on seeking the Kingdom of God.

II. HOW ARE YOU HANDLING YOUR FINANCES?

A. Don't Be Materialistic In Your Approach To Life

God wants all of us as His people to prosper (III John 2). He wants us to enjoy the physical things of this life (Eccl. 5:18), but He doesn't want us to set our hearts on the pleasures, pastimes and material pursuits of this physical life. It is a matter of our attitude and approach!

I Corinthians 7:31 -- God allows us to USE, but He does not want us to ABUSE -- or use too fully -- the physical things in this world. He wants us to realize they have a part in this physical life for character development but then pass away!

II Corinthians 4:18 -- We need to understand that which we can see, taste, feel, hear and smell -- that which we can discern with our physical senses, is not the reality. The physical things around us, that which means so much to us and appeals so strongly to our physical senses and pulls of the flesh, are only temporary -- eventually to be destroyed with this world, when God has finished using this physical earth as a training ground for adding sons to His Ruling Family (II Pet. 3:10-13). Therefore, no physical thing is of lasting value, and the pursuit of physical comforts, accouterments, food, clothing and pleasures should not be our aim or goal in life and should not consume the majority of our time, nor fill the majority of our thoughts. What we will retain after this physical life is God's Spirit and the character we have built, not the physical possessions we have accumulated (I Tim. 6:6-10)!

Matthew 6:19-23 -- God counsels us to lay up treasures in heaven -- to set our affections on THINGS ABOVE, not things on this earth (Col. 3:3). We do this by putting our treasure -- our money -- into God's Work rather than lavishing it on ourselves out of proportion to what we should be spending on ourselves in view of our level or station in life. We must be single-mindedly seeking His Kingdom (Verse 24). It is utterly IMPOSSIBLE for us as carnal human beings to set as a goal the attainment of material things -- the status symbols, creature comforts and physical pleasures of this life -- and at the same time to wholeheartedly seek God's Kingdom and His righteousness.

Isaiah 55:2 -- We who understand God's plan are without excuse! The spiritual Gentiles of this world do not have the perspective or the understanding to "lay up treasure in heaven" by properly spending their money. But how about us? Have we been giving in to the pressures of this materialistic society in which we are living, or can we say honestly before God that we are seeking His Kingdom first in every way -- including the way we manage our finances?

B. God Knows Our Needs

Matthew 6:25:31-- God doesn't want us to be anxiously concerned about our basic NEEDS of food, drink and clothing. How much LESS, then, should we be concerned about other things in this physical life which aren't really "needs"!

Verse 32 -- The Gentiles -- those who don't know God and who don't have the goal of someday becoming God -- seek after material things. But we - - as converted sons of God whose eyes have been opened and enlightened - - we of all people should not be overly concerned about things pertaining to this physical life and realize that God will and does provide for us.

C. Live by Faith

Matthew 6:33-34 -- God promises us that He will provide for our needs if we do seek His Kingdom first. He wants us to learn to LIVE BY FAITH. We must trust HIM to provide for our needs. It isn't natural to trust God and exercise faith, but that is what we must do if we set ourselves to manage our finances GOD'S way. As a way of life, God wants us to look to Him and trust Him in everything. Our attitude must be that of Faith and complete CONFIDENCE in God.

This should be our attitude and approach in managing our finances. We must, first of all, set our hearts on God's Kingdom and His Work NOT the things of this world! Secondly, we must have Faith IN GOD that HE will provide all our NEEDS and also any ADDITIONAL MATERIAL BLESSINGS He decides we really should have (Ps. 34:10)!

III. OBEY GOD'S FINANCIAL PRINCIPLES

We have seen what our attitude and approach should be. Now let's look at some specific principles we must follow in managing our finances God's way.

A. Pay Your Tithes Faithfully

Malachi 3:8 -- Do individuals in God's Church steal first, second or third tithe? You bet they do! Every year before the Feast, we discover literally dozens of "members" who have stolen from their second tithe, either by failing to save it or by "borrowing" from it. There are dozens -- perhaps hundreds -- more who we don't discover, but God knows! We have found that "leading men" in the Church -- men being considered for ordination as deacons, and some who are in the Visiting Program Training Class -- do not faithfully pay even their first tithe! These, according to Malachi 3:9, are cursed with a curse. They will

be cursed financially now, and if they don't repent, they will be cursed for all eternity and perish in the lake of fire!

Others pay their tithes, but grudgingly. Many hate to see their third-tithe year approaching. With this kind of an attitude, they, too, are cursed financially. God will never prosper them!

Job 41:11 -- Remember, God owns everything -- even you (I Cor. 6:19-20)! Your income and everything you own belongs totally to God. He requires you to pay the first tenth to Him through His Work. The second He commands you to save in order to keep His Feasts. A third tenth He requires you to pay every third year out of a seven-year cycle as a form of welfare to help widows, orphans, strangers, and His ministers. Then, once you have discharged these obligations, God gives you the rest. However, God still has prior claims on part of it.

B. Remember The Poor

Leviticus 19:9-10 -- God made special provision in Israel for the poor and needy to acquire food. This was a command from God. He is just as concerned about the poor among His people today. Many places in Proverbs show God's concern for the poor (Prov. 19:17; 21:13; 28:27).

How can we give to the needy today? The primary way is by contributing a regular amount to the LOVE FUND. This is a fund that is administered by your local minister for persons in need in your local area who do not qualify for third tithe help. It doesn't have to be a large amount, but you should contribute a small amount on a regular basis. A guideline might be about one-half of one percent of each paycheck, or several dollars a month depending on your income.

Luke 14:12 -- In addition to a regular Love Fund donation, there are other ways that we can give to the poor. We can invite them to dinner on occasion. We tend to invite over for dinner only those whose company we enjoy, or those who will return the invitation. That is not wrong, at times, but you'll be blessed if you also entertain the needy.

C. Lay Up Treasure In Heaven

After you have faithfully paid your tithes and given to the poor, realize that you still have not put one cent of your TREASURE into God's Work! The tithes are not yours, and the other -- even though commanded of God -- did not go into the Work. Your treasure is what you have left after you pay your tithes. It is through our offering that we "lay up treasure in heaven"!

Notice that in Malachi 3:8, God says He had been robbed of tithes and offerings. This means regular offerings as well as the special offerings (Deut. 16:16-17) that God commands for the Holy Days. Offerings are an absolute requirement, just as much as tithes are. The difference is that God sets the amount for His tithes, but He leaves the amount of the offerings up to us. This is the gauge that indicates just how much our hearts are in the Work of God!

Mr. Herbert Armstrong has said again and again that those who do not have their HEARTS in the Work of God are not growing spiritually, while those who do have their hearts in the Work grow steadily and continuously. We saw the principle in Matthew 6:21 that where a man's treasure is, his heart will be also! Those who are not diligently putting their treasure into God's Work do not have their hearts in it. God does not need our money, but He has given us a tremendous opportunity to be a part of this end-time Work which is fulfilling the office of Elijah!

IV. INSURE YOUR FUTURE BY INVESTING IN GOD'S WORK

A. Give According To Your Blessings

Luke 21:1-4 -- God is not concerned with the amount, per se, of our offerings. He wants us to give an offering that reflects the degree to which we have been blessed and which reflects our awareness and appreciation of His blessings. Most of us in America and Canada in God's Church have been blessed above measure in every way -- not just physically. But by nature we are Unthankful for most of the blessings we have. Instead of naturally desiring to show our gratitude through our offerings, the more we get, the more we naturally covet and lust for.

Deuteronomy 16:17 -- The principle of giving offerings is that **WE SHOULD GIVE ACCORDING TO THE BLESSINGS GOD HAS GIVEN US**. As God increasingly prospers us, we should increase our offering at least in proportion to the increase we receive) if not more!

II Corinthians 9:6-7 -- Here is a principle to remember. What you sow this year in offerings to God's Work) determines to what extent God will bless you financially next year. If a man has a bumper crop of wheat, sells it and lives it up on the profits, failing to invest in seed and machinery for next year, he fails. So it is with you. If you have spent your extra money lavishing physical things on yourself and have neglected investing sufficiently in God's Work this year, you will not prosper financially next year. It is a simple equation -- the extent to which you give this year largely determines

the extent to which God will bless you next year. The die is, for the most part, already cast for you for 1969, based on your offerings through the Feast in 1968. But you can insure a prosperous 1970 by your generous offerings this coming year!

If you are not being blessed now as a result of not sowing generously in the past, YOU have to break the cycle! You have to begin to give more, realizing that you aren't being blessed because you have sowed sparingly. This may, for a time, require a real sacrifice, but if your ATTITUDE is right, you have an absolute guarantee from God that He will prosper you!

B. Go Into Partnership With God

God is in the BUSINESS of bringing sons into His Family. He is carrying out this business -- this Work -- through His WORK on earth, and He has called us to have a part in it. He has called us to become partners with Him! We have a certain amount of capital, which is what we have left after paying our tithes and all our living expenses. Our entire approach toward managing our finances should be to have as much capital as possible to INVEST IN GOD'S WORK! It is the only concern on earth that will really pay off! Investments in God's Work, which are our OFFERINGS will pay off in blessings here and now, and for ALL ETERNITY in God's Kingdom!

Besides your regular offerings, a generous amount should be invested on a regular basis for the Property Fund. Remember, God's building program is soon going to envelop the ENTIRE EARTH! You should eagerly want to have a part in it!

In addition, a large portion should be carefully set aside each payday and planned for the larger investments on the Holy Days. Your Holy Day offerings especially reflect whether you are taking seriously the partnership to which God has called you.

If you are running your business carefully and well, you can invest as much as ten percent of your gross income, or more, in God's Work as offerings!

Matthew 6:19-21 -- Your treasure is not your tithes, but your offerings. That which you lavish on yourself will perish! But your investment in God's Work will insure your future, as well as blessings here and now, and will provide the means for others to be called in this age as well (Luke 16:9).

V. CHOOSE WHOM YOU WILL SERVE!

We all realize that the Work of God is the best investment that we can make. We all know this intellectually, and most of you on your entrance examinations indicated that you would advise investing in God's Work rather than in anything in this world, but as a WAY OF LIFE, is this your approach in managing your finances?

For most of you it isn't -- at least not to the extent it should be! We have found that many in the Visiting Program Training Class are not regularly contributing generously to the Property Fund - some, NOT AT ALL! Many aren't looking ahead and preparing for Holy Day offerings, as shown by what they give in comparison with the income God has given them! How about YOU? How do you stack up in comparison to the widow with two mites? Most of us fall short, but let's resolve to CHANGE! Let's resolve to begin to manage our finances with a new and different approach.

We can't buy our way into the Kingdom of God. It is a gift of God. But by managing our finances God's way and by striving to invest as much as possible in His Work through our offerings, we are building CHARACTER which will qualify us for a position in that Kingdom. By proving ourselves faithful in that which is least, we show that we will be faithful in much in the future!

This, then, is the crux of managing our finances God's way. God requires that we pay tithes, give to the poor, and give offering. Our choice is only whether we will obey God in these matters, but the amount of offerings we give in comparison to what we could give clearly shows our attitude and approach to managing our finances.

If we allow ourselves some THING -- whether it be a new home, car, television set or even a night out at the movies - - which cuts into the amount we should be giving as an offering, based on our capacity to give, we are robbing God! Our attitude is WRONG! We have set our hearts on that material pleasure or thing, whatever it might be. This is a form of Idolatry (Col. 3:5 -- last part)!

God plainly sees whether the emphasis in our life is on acquiring and envying material things, or on putting our treasure into His Work as a type of investment for the future. He can clearly see whether we are living by faith and trusting Him to provide, not only our needs but also any special blessings He might want to give us, or whether we are constantly "making provision for the flesh" in our approach to managing our finances.

No man can serve two masters (Matt. 6:24)! You can't serve the true God. and continue to spend most of your time and money on other things.

I Kings 18:21 -- The time has come to make a choice! If God be God) then follow Him) trust Him, obey Him and begin to manage your finances His way! Your eternal reward depends on it!

ASSIGNMENTS FOR NEXT CLASS

1. "Which Day is the Christian Sabbath," by Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong.
2. "Rejoice in God's Sabbath," by Mr. Roderick C. Meredith, Reprint #300, GOOD NEWS, December 1962.
3. "Keep God's Sabbath Holy," by Mr. Bill McDowell, GOOD NEWS, March 1968.