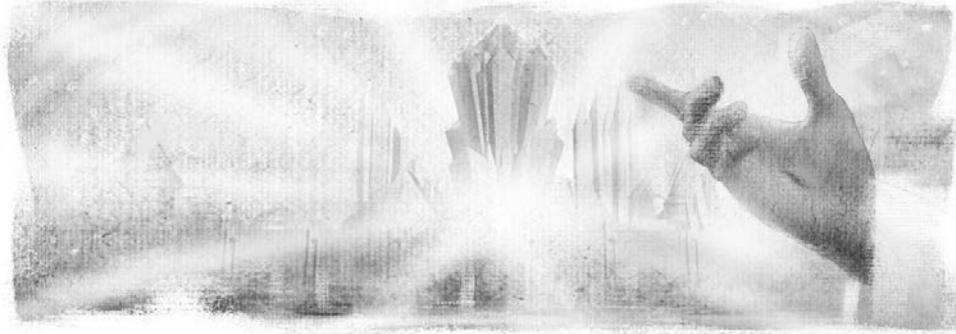


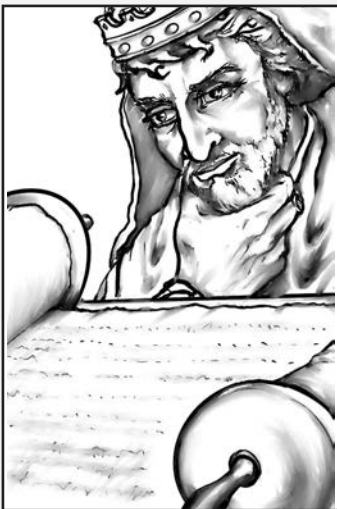
Future Rewards



SABBATH—MARCH 18

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Hebrews 11:6; Romans 6:23; Revelation 21; Matthew 25:14–19; Romans 8:16–18.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘The master answered, “You did well. You are a good servant who can be trusted. You did well with small things. So I will let you care for much greater [more important] things. Come and share my happiness with me” ’ ” (Matthew 25:21, ICB).



David understands that God wants us to live holy lives and to obey His law.

OUR GOOD BEHAVIOR can't save us. At the same time, God promises us to honor people who accept Jesus and His holy life. This promise encourages us to live holy lives now.

David understands that God wants us to live holy lives and to obey His law. That's why David writes, “The LORD's teachings are perfect. They give strength to his people. The LORD's rules can be trusted. They help even the foolish become wise. The LORD's laws are right. They make people happy. The LORD's commands are good. They show people the right way to live. Learning respect for the LORD is good. It will last [continue] forever. The LORD's judgments [decisions] are right. They are completely [always] fair. His teachings are worth more than pure [the best] gold. They are sweeter than the best honey dripping from the honeycomb. His teachings warn his servants, and good things come to those who obey them” (Psalm 19:7–11, ERV).

The Bible talks about the things God promises us because of Jesus. We will get these rewards after the Second Coming.

What rewards are we promised? How can we be sure that God will give us these rewards?

GOD REWARDS OUR FAITH (Hebrews 11:6)

Read Hebrews 11:6. What does this verse teach us about faith? What does God reward? Now read Revelation 22:12; Isaiah 40:10; and Isaiah 62:11. What do these verses also teach us about God's gift?

God's gift to His children is very special. As with many spiritual things, we may not understand everything about this gift now. "As humans, we can't find words to explain God's gift for His people. Who can understand this gift? Only the people who go to heaven. Our human thinking is limited. So, for now, we can't fully understand the beauty of our home in heaven."—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, page 675, adapted.

Jesus talks about the gift waiting for us in heaven, too: "People will insult you and hurt you. They will lie and say all kinds of evil things about you because you follow me. But when they do that, know that great blessings belong to you. Be happy about it. Be very glad because you have a great reward waiting for you in heaven. People did these same bad things to the prophets [Old Testament preachers] who lived before you" (Matthew 5:11, 12, ERV).

In Hebrews 11, Paul gives us a list of Bible heroes who showed a lot of faith in their lives. Many of these people suffered for their faith, just as Jesus talked about in Matthew 5:11, 12. They all died. But before they died, they believed God would wake them up from the dead some day. In Hebrews 12, Paul talks about the reward, or joy, that Jesus got. Paul explains that this joy is why Jesus wanted to die on the cross for us.

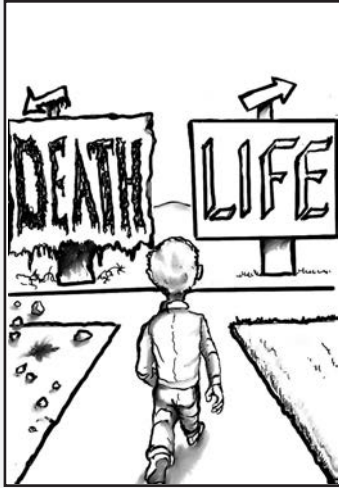
"So we have many people of faith around us. Their lives tell us what faith means. So let us run the race that is before us and never give up. We should remove from our lives anything that would get in the way. And we should remove the sin that so easily catches us [causes us to make wrong choices]. Let us look only to Jesus. He is the one who began our faith, and he makes our faith perfect. Jesus suffered death on the cross. But he accepted the shame of the cross as if it were nothing. He did this because of the joy that God put before him. And now he is sitting at the right side of God's throne" (Hebrews 12:1, 2, ICB).

God's reward for our faith is not the same thing as our saving ourselves by our good behavior. If we can save ourselves by our works, why did Jesus need to die on the cross?



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EVERLASTING LIFE (Romans 6:23)



The Bible teaches us that we must choose between everlasting life and everlasting death (Deuteronomy 30:19).

The Bible teaches us that we must choose between everlasting life and everlasting death (Deuteronomy 30:19). This death also is named the second death. We will not wake up from this death.

Read Romans 6:23 and John 3:16. What choices do these verses tell us that we have?

If you are reading this guide, you may have made your decision already. Or maybe you are thinking about it. God can do whatever He says He will do. He can keep all His promises. We must do our part, too. We must believe God can do what He says. We must trust in everything Jesus did for us. We must obey God's commandments by faith.

Read John 14:1–3. What does the Lord tell us to do in verse 1? What does the Lord promise to us in verses 2 and 3?

Jesus said these words when His work on earth almost was finished. He wanted to give His followers courage and hope. Jesus' words fill us with hope and courage, too. His words give us strength during tough times. Jesus came from heaven. He went back to heaven. He promises us, " 'I will come back. Then I will take you with me, so that you can be where I am' " (John 14:3, ERV).

Jesus' waking up from the dead at His First Coming is a promise that He will come back. Without the Second Coming, what good is the First Coming? We know that Jesus died for us on the cross. So, we can be sure of His promise to come again.

Jesus' First Coming is a promise to us that He will come again. What happened at the First Coming that makes the Second Coming a promise we can trust? (Read 1 Corinthians 15:17–20 for the answer.)

THE NEW JERUSALEM (Revelation 21)

By faith, Abraham saw the city of New Jerusalem. “Abraham was looking for a city which will last [continue] for ever. It was the city God planned and made” (Hebrews 11:10, WE). The New Jerusalem is God’s masterpiece. God built this city for the people who love and obey Him. God’s people will live in the New Jerusalem in heaven for 1,000 years. After that, God will move the New Jerusalem to this earth when He makes our planet new again. Then God’s people will live on the earth forever. Now that’s good news for people who hate packing and moving. God takes care of everything! John says he saw the city: “I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem. It was coming down out of heaven from God. It was made ready like [the same as] a bride is made ready for her husband” (Revelation 21:2, NLV).

Read Revelation 21. What are some of the things in this chapter that God promises us?

We are sinners. So, we have trouble understanding fully everything that God promises us. But we understand a little. That small understanding gives us hope!

1. Jesus will live with us on the new earth, just as He lived with us on earth at His First Coming. During His First Coming, people saw Jesus face-to-face. We will have that chance again (Revelation 22:4). But things will be better because there won’t be sin anymore. So, we will be able to understand and know Jesus better than we do now.

2. God “ ‘will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death, sadness [feeling sad], crying, or pain. All the old ways are gone’ ” (Revelation 21:4, ERV). Wow! This promise is so wonderful!

3. The river of life will flow from the throne of God. The tree of life grows on both sides of the river. God’s people will “see his face” (Revelation 22:4, ERV). Look at what we are promised again. The saved ones will live with God. We will know Him in a way we don’t know Him now.

Read Revelation 21:8, about the sins done by the ones who will die the second death. Some people who did these same sins are saved. So, why are the people in Revelation 21:8 lost? How are the two groups different?



God “ ‘will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death, sadness [feeling sad], crying, or pain. All the old ways are gone’ ” (Revelation 21:4, ERV).

WHAT DID YOU DO WITH MY MONEY? (Matthew 25:14–19)

In Matthew 25, Jesus talks about what will be happening in the church just before He comes back. Jesus shares three picture stories about the church. One of these picture stories is about a rich man who went on a long trip. He left some of His riches with his servants to manage wisely. The picture story is about how God expects His people to wisely use His gifts for Him.

Read the picture story about the money managers in Matthew 25:14–19. Who does the man give his money to? What important Bible truth does verse 19 show us?



God expects His people to wisely use His gifts for Him.

We sometimes think that gifts or talents only are natural gifts. We name them natural gifts because we are born with them. These gifts include singing, communicating, and so on. But God's gifts are so much more than these things (also read Luke 19:12–26). Ellen G. White says, "God showed me that we don't understand everything there is to know about the picture story about the talents [in Luke 19:12–24]. Jesus told this story to His followers. The lesson in this story is important for Christians living today, too. Yes, the talents are a word picture for the gifts of preaching and teaching. But the talents also show us the gifts of money that God gives His people."—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 1, page 197, adapted.

Read Matthew 25:20–23. What does God say to money managers who supported His work? Why does God say, " 'Come and share my happiness with me' " " (Matthew 25:23, ERV)? What do these words mean?

What if someone has more money and talents than we do? Should God expect more work from this person and less work from us? The picture story in Matthew 25:24–30 shows us that this idea is wrong. The person in the story with only one talent is the one who loses the kingdom. So, don't worry about what God asks other people to do. Let us ask God how we can serve Him best with the gifts He gives us.

What will you say when God asks you, " '[What] did [you do] with [My] money' " (Matthew 25:19, ERV)?

GETTING THE PRIZE (Romans 8:16–18)

Read what Paul wrote in Romans 8:16–18. Paul knew that he was God’s child. How did this Bible truth help Paul stay loyal to God and obey Him?

Paul wanted the reward God promised to His children who believe in Him. This reward kept Paul excited about serving God. That’s why Paul wasn’t afraid to suffer for God. When Paul was in prison, he wrote: “Brothers and sisters, I know that I still [continue to] have a long way to go. But there is one thing I do: I forget what is in the past and try as hard as I can to reach the goal [prize] before me. I keep running hard toward the finish line to get the prize that is mine because God has called [invited] me through [by] Christ Jesus to life up there in heaven” (Philippians 3:13, 14, ERV).

Read 1 Timothy 6:6–12. We already looked at these verses before. But they are worth reading again. What is the important message for us in them?

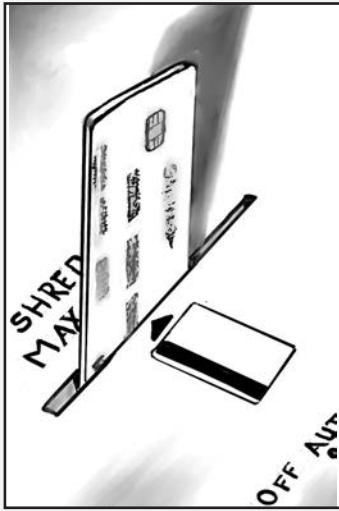
The Bible teaches us that we should be happy with what we have. God will give us what we need when we need it. We must **not** live only to collect a lot of stuff. God promises us, “God will give you everything you need. He has wonderful riches in heaven because of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19, WE). We also need to be thankful for everything God has given us.

God doesn’t promise us that we all will be rich and have a lot of stuff. If we live holy lives, we will suffer. But God does promise to give us everything we need. He promises to be with us wherever we go. In the end, God will give His obedient children riches from heaven and everlasting life. This future reward is so wonderful!

Near the end of his life, Paul had the faith to say, “My life is being given as an offering for God. The time has come for me to leave this life here. I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have served the Lord faithfully [with faith]. Now, a prize is waiting for me . . . the crown that will show I am right with God. The Lord, the judge who judges rightly [is always fair], will give it to me on that Day. Yes, he will give it to me and to everyone else who is eagerly looking forward to his coming” (2 Timothy 4:6–8, ERV). May we stay excited, too. Let us have the same faith in our hearts as Paul.



Paul had the faith to say, “My life is being given as an offering for God. . . . Now, a prize is waiting for me . . . the crown that will show I am right with God” (2 Timothy 4:6–8, ERV).



Church members no longer are “slaves” to credit cards, loans, and debt.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read the important rules for good managers below. As a church, what if we followed all these rules? Can you imagine that church in your mind?

1. Pastors and local church leaders will teach members the important rules about being good managers.

2. Church members follow these important rules in their lives. The members become more giving. They save often so that they will have money for emergencies and for other expenses they do not expect. Church members no longer are “slaves” to credit cards, loans, and debt. Debt is money that you owe.

3. Church members show that God has changed their lives. They don’t spend too much. They are happy with what they have. Money is not their “god.” The church grows strong in its friendship with God.

4. Church members will trust in God and not worry about money. They have grateful hearts. They are happy with everything God gives them.

5. Married church members learn to solve their problems with God’s help. Church members expect to meet with God when they come to church. They also expect God to work with them.

6. The church members give enough offerings to support all the work that the church does in the community and worldwide. The church has a strong outreach program to the local community. The church shows God’s love in real ways to people who need help.

The question we all must ask ourselves after reading this list is: “What is God asking us to do with whatever gifts He gives us?”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

① In class, talk about these two Bible teachings: (1) we are saved by God’s mercy because of faith and (2) God gives us a reward for all the things we did for Him in this life. Why are both Bible teachings true?

② We must learn to be happy with what we have. Does that mean we can’t try harder to get a better job that makes more money? Explain.

A PRECIOUS TREASURE

13-year-old Precious was upset with her father. Precious cried as Father led her through the gates of a Seventh-day Adventist school in Uganda. Precious didn't want to study and live at the Adventist school. She wanted to study at the beautiful school that taught her family's religion. "Beautiful buildings don't make a school good," her father told Precious. The beautiful school had not been doing well for the past three years. People didn't respect this school now as much as they did in the past.

Precious said nothing more to her father. But her unhappiness showed in her face. When Father waved goodbye at the gate, Precious cried. "Why has Father put me in this 'prison' that is named a school?" she asked. A smiling woman came over to Precious. "Hello," the woman said. "Let's go to the house where the girl students live. I will show you where you will sleep."

Precious was sad and didn't want to go. But she followed the woman anyway. The woman carried Precious's mattress and suitcase to the student house. That evening, Precious saw students standing in a line outside an old building. Precious wondered what was happening. Then she saw students carrying plates of food. Precious knew that the old building was the cafeteria. That evening, Precious ate a vegetarian meal for the first time in her life. Later, Precious heard a bell ring. She saw students run to the campus chapel for evening worship. Precious decided to go to the students' house. But the doors were closed. So, Precious went back to the chapel. She stood on the porch, not sure what she should do. The smiling woman that helped her earlier came over to her. "Come inside the Lord's house. It's prayer time. Don't be sad."

The woman was so nice. Precious felt loved. She went inside the chapel. Right away, she stopped feeling sad. Students were singing in the chapel. Precious never heard singing so beautiful before. She also liked the worship time that happened after the singing. Worship only was 30 minutes long. Precious thought the worship was very interesting. She thought, "At least I will enjoy this part of school."

Father didn't come back to see Precious until the end of the quarter. Father was afraid that Precious would refuse to stay at school if he came any sooner. Father was surprised when Precious announced that she wanted to go back to the school after her school break was over. Precious told Father that she didn't want to miss her nice teachers. The teachers started every class with prayer and a Bible verse. When Precious came back to school, the school held a week of prayer. Precious gave her life to Jesus.

INSIDE
Story
by JOHN KAGANZI



**"Come inside
the Lord's house.
It's prayer time.
Don't be sad."**



