

# THE PLAN THAT CAME FROM HEAVEN

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**GOD FIRST**  
ADVENTIST STEWARDSHIP MINISTRIES

***The Plan That Came From Heaven***

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## GROUP ACTIVITY

# The Plan That Came From Heaven

(Based on *Counsels on Stewardship*, pp. 25; 73-76; 80, 81)

**Purpose:** To establish the difference between “impulse” and “principle” as motivators for offerings; identify the Source of the true motivation; identify the biblical (divine) system of offerings and its results.

### INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Leader and secretary: Each group must choose a leader, who will conduct the discussion, and a secretary, who will report the conclusions.
2. Read the inspired texts: Before any other work, each group must read all the assigned texts (one paragraph per participant).
3. The Group Activity is provided at the end of the text in the “Growing Together” section.
4. Answers are based on the texts: The group must find the answer(s) based primarily on the inspired text provided, and not only from opinions, unless there is an open question, with specific instruction to discuss personal opinions.
5. Group opinion: In case of open questions (no right or wrong answers), the group should discuss which opinion(s) would better express the thought of the group (not only that of the leader).
6. Timeliness: The group should spend no more than five (5) minutes on each question, and secretaries must take no more than one (1) minute to answer publicly.
7. Paragraph zero: Be aware that some pages may begin with paragraph zero (0), which is the continuation of the last paragraph of the previous page.

All the following quotes are taken from Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Stewardship*.

## Chapter 4 – The Conflicting Principles of Christ and Satan

### An Unequal Contest

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Selfishness is the strongest and most general of human impulses, the struggle of the soul between sympathy and covetousness is an unequal contest; for while selfishness is the strongest passion, love and benevolence are too often the weakest, and as a rule the evil gains the victory. Therefore in our labors and gifts for God's cause, it is unsafe to be controlled by feeling or impulse.—p. 25.1.

To give or to labor when our sympathies are moved, and to withhold our gifts or service when the emotions are not stirred, is an unwise and dangerous course. If we are controlled by impulse or mere human sympathy, then a few instances where our efforts for others are repaid with ingratitude, or where our gifts are abused or squandered, will be sufficient to freeze up the springs of beneficence. Christians should act from fixed principle, following the Saviour's example of self-denial and self-sacrifice.—p. 25.2.

## Chapter 14—A Plan Beautiful in Simplicity

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God's plan in the tithing system is beautiful in its simplicity and equality. All may take hold of it in faith and courage, for it is divine in its origin. In it are combined simplicity and utility, and it does not require depth of learning to understand and execute it. .... —p. 73.1.

Great objects are accomplished by this system. If one and all would accept it, each would be made a vigilant and faithful treasurer for God; and there would be no want of means with which to carry forward the great work of sounding the last message of warning to the world. The treasury will be full if all adopt this system, and the contributors will not be left the poorer. Through every investment made, they will become more wedded to the cause of present truth. They will be "laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.—p. 73.2.

### For Rich and Poor

In the Bible system of tithes and offerings the amounts paid by different persons will of course vary greatly, since they are proportioned to the income. With the poor man, the tithe will be a comparatively small sum, and his gifts will be according to his ability. But it is not

the greatness of the gift that makes the offering acceptable to God; it is the purpose of the heart, the spirit of gratitude and love that it expresses. Let not the poor feel that their gifts are so small as to be unworthy of notice. Let them give according to their ability, feeling that they are servants of God, and that He will accept their offering. —p. 73.3.

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[...] —p. 74.1

In the great work of warning the world, those who have the truth in the heart, and are sanctified through the truth, will act their assigned part. They will be faithful in the payment of tithes and offerings. Every church member is bound by covenant relation with God to deny himself of every extravagant outlay of means. Let not the want of economy in the home life render us unable to act our part in strengthening the work already established, and in entering new territory.—p. 74.2.

[...] —p. 74.3

## Page 75

He who gave His only-begotten Son to die for you, has made a covenant with you. He gives you His blessings, and in return He requires you to bring Him your tithes and offerings. No one will ever dare to say that there was no way in which he could understand in regard to this matter. God's plan regarding tithes and offerings is definitely stated in the third chapter of Malachi. God calls upon His human agents to be true to the contract He has made with them. "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse," He says, "that there may be meat in Mine house."—p. 75.1.

### Not a Rigorous Law

Some will pronounce this one of the rigorous laws binding upon the Hebrews. But this was not a burden to the willing heart that loved God. It was only when their selfish natures were strengthened by withholding, that men lost sight of eternal considerations, and valued their earthly treasures above souls.—p. 75.2.

### No Burden Save to the Disobedient

Christians are required by the Scriptures to enter upon a plan of active benevolence which

will keep in constant exercise an interest in the salvation of their fellow men. The moral law enjoined the observance of the Sabbath, which was not a burden, except when that law was transgressed and they were bound by the penalties involved in breaking it. The tithing system was no burden to those who did not depart from the plan. The system enjoined upon the Hebrews has not been repealed or relaxed by the One who originated it. Instead of being of no force now, it was to be more fully carried out and more extended, as salvation through Christ alone should be more fully brought to light in the Christian age.—p. 75.3.

## **Chapter 16—Regularity and System**

### **Page 80**

The directions given by the Holy Spirit through the apostle Paul in regard to gifts, present a principle that applies also to tithing: “Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him.” Parents and children are here included. Not only the rich, but the poor, are addressed. “Every man according as he purposeth in his heart [through the candid consideration of God’s prescribed plan], so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.” The gifts are to be made in consideration of the great goodness of God to us. —p. 80.1.

... Thus our practice will be a weekly sermon, declaring that God is the possessor of all our property, and that He has made us stewards to use it to His glory. Every acknowledgment of our obligation to God will strengthen the sense of obligation. Gratitude deepens as we give it expression, and the joy it brings is life to soul and body.—p. 80.2.

### **First the Tithe—Then Offerings**

This matter of giving is not left to impulse. God has given us definite instruction in regard to it. He has specified tithes and offerings as the measure of our obligation. And He desires us to give regularly and systematically.... Let each regularly examine his income, which is all a blessing from God, and set apart the tithe as a separate fund, to be sacredly the Lord’s. This fund should not in any case be devoted to any other use; it is to be devoted solely to support the ministry of the gospel. After the tithe is set apart, let gifts and offerings be apportioned, “as God hath prospered” you.—p. 80.3.

### **Page 81**

### **Meeting God’s Claims First**

Not only does the Lord claim the tithe as His own, but He tells us how it should be reserved



# Growing Together

1. Why do you believe it is unsafe to be controlled by feelings or impulse in our relationships, labors, and gifts?— p. 25.1-2

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2. After reading —p. 25.1-2, why do you think vows (e.g., marriage, Sabbath, tithing, Promise, etc.) are so important for Christians?

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3. **CASE STUDY:** Linda vowed to return tithe and to give a huge fixed amount as offering every Sabbath. Now, six months later, she has been fired from her job, has no income, and is struggling to give what she vowed as offerings. How does God’s system of offerings help her to avoid this problem (*Hint:* —p. 73.3)? What Bible verses would you use to help her to understand the concept?

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4. **CASE STUDY:** Stanley is opening a new business and is considering tithing and giving offerings to be blessed, ignoring that even though it is not wrong, this is not the best motivation. As a spiritual leader, how would you help him to understand the right motivation for tithing and giving offerings (*Hint:* —p. 75.1)? What Bible verses would you use?

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5. The text in 73.2 presents at least four advantages of adopting God’s system of tithes and offerings. If you were to choose one, which would be the most important?

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6. God’s system of tithes and offerings has two main characteristics (—p. 80.3-81.0). How would you explain the meaning of each of these characteristics? Why are they important?

a. First: \_\_\_\_\_: \_\_\_\_\_

b. Second: \_\_\_\_\_: \_\_\_\_\_

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7. **CASE STUDY:** Anna feels sad and unwilling to give every time she sits to calculate the tithe and her Promise (systematic/regular percentage-based offering). She is strongly considering not returning tithe and giving Promise because she believes that God cannot accept and bless a giving heart like hers. Would it be better for her not to give (—p. 75.3)? Why? What Bible verses would you use to help her?

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8. **CASE STUDY:** Martin was baptized one month ago and wants to know **how much** and **when** he should give offerings. What principles can you share with him based on —p.

80.3, —p. 81.0 and the Bible?

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9. **CASE STUDY:** Patrick loves the Lord but is worried. He is unable to tithe and bring offerings to the Lord because at the end of the month, when he plans to calculate the tithe and offerings, he has no money left. What biblical principles would you use to help him? (*Hint:* —p. 81.1-2).

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## Promise: Offering Under God's Most Basis System



### When I give with the heart:

“I give when I want and when I can. As I never can and never want, I never give.”—Attributed to

Arnaldo Enriquez, a Peruvian and former SAD Stewardship Ministries director, a statement he made while explaining about wrong motivations to give.



### “HOW MUCH”:

- **The Principle of the Purpose:** 2 Cor. 9:7 (“... give as he purposes in his heart...”) – There must be a purpose (Gr. “proaireomai”), which means, a decision taken before, an established purpose.
- **The Principle of the Proportionality:** Deut. 16:17; I Cor. 16:2 “... according to the blessing ...,” or “... as he may prosper....” The proportional system implies that the change on prosperity will bring a similar change on the amount given on tithes and offerings. They should be given “according to the blessing,” or “as he may prosper.”



### “WHEN”:

- **The Principle of the Priority:** Matt. 6:33; Prov. 3:9, 10 (“But seek first...,” “... with the firstfruits...”) – which means that what belongs to God (tithes and offerings) should be de-livered before any other expense will be met.
- **The Principle of the Regularity:** Prov. 3:9 (“... with the firstfruits of all your increase,” which means, when there is an increase, and every time there is an increase.

“If the plan of systematic benevolence\* were adopted by every individual and fully carried out, there would be a constant supply in the treasury. The income would flow in like a steady stream constantly supplied by overflowing springs of benevolence...”—E. G. White, *Testimony and Treasurer*, p. 368.4

“... The Lord made a special covenant with men, that if they would regularly set apart the portion designated for the advancement of Christ’s kingdom, the Lord would bless them abundantly, so that there would not be room to receive His gifts. But if men withhold that which belongs to God, the Lord plainly declares, “Ye are cursed with a curse.”—E. G. White, *Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 77.1



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