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April 4, 2020

WHY ARE VOWS IMPORTANT?

It was Sabbath morning, and the pastor was conducting a renewal of vows ceremony. This would encourage members to recommit themselves to keep the Sabbath, to be faithful to their spouses, and also to vow to return the tithe and a percentage of their income as offerings.

Martha was not comfortable with the latter. “Why should I make a vow about offerings?” she asked Jackie, who gave her Bible studies. “Can’t I just give as my heart is stirred, or if I trust that there is a project worthy to be supported?” said Martha. Jackie told her that, “as our ‘heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked’ (Jer. 17:9), we cannot just trust in our feelings or impulses to do what is right.”

Jackie also mentioned that, according to Ellen G. White, “it is unsafe [for us] to be controlled by feelings or impulse” when we give our gifts, because our natural inclination for selfishness is stronger than love, and so, as a rule, “evil gains the victory.” She also says that “if we are controlled by impulse or mere human sympathy,” we may stop giving “if our efforts... are repaid with ingratitude” or if “our gifts are abused or squandered.” That is why

“Christians should act from a fixed principle, following the Savior’s example of self-denial and self-sacrifice (E. G. White, *Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 25).”

“So,” said Jackie, “vows or promises, humbly taken in God’s presence, will tell Him that we allow His Spirit to replace our selfish heart of stone by a heart of His own creation, willing to ‘act from a fixed principle,’ and to fulfill His will. We do not promise that we will do it by our own strength, but by His miracle in us,” added Jackie, “as ‘it is God who works in you both to will and to do for his good pleasure’ (Phil. 2:13).”

After earnestly praying, Martha decided that she would no longer be controlled by feelings, projects or sympathy on her giving, but by principle, vowing a percentage of her income to be given regularly and systematically, as offering.

APPEAL: “Make vows to the Lord your God, and pay them; let all who are around Him bring presents to Him who ought to be feared (Ps. 76:11).”

PRAYER: Please, Lord, accept the vows that we make before you today!