

The Habits of a Good Manager



SABBATH—MARCH 17

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Ephesians 5:15–17; Colossians 3:23; Luke 12:35–48; James 4:14; Acts 3:21.

MEMORY VERSE: “How can a young man keep his way pure [free from sin]? By living by Your Word [the Bible]. I have looked for You with all my heart. Do not let me turn from Your Law. Your Word [I have] hid[den] in my heart, that I may not sin against You” (Psalm 119:9–11, NLV).

YOUR HABITS show the purpose of your life. They show where your life is going, too. Wise managers of God's gifts will learn and practice good habits. Then they will be loyal servants. Daniel's life shows what good habits are. Daniel made a habit of praying every day (Daniel 6:10). Paul's habit was to be in a place of worship on the Sabbath (Acts 17:1, 2). Paul also writes, “Do not be fooled: ‘Bad friends will ruin good habits’ ” (1 Corinthians 15:33, ICB). So, we should practice good habits. Good habits should take the place of bad ones. “Our habits make us who we are in this life and in the next life in heaven. So, we must make good habits now. We must be loyal in doing every duty God gives us.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies [Messages] for the Church*, volume 4, page 452, adapted.

Making good habits is the fastest way to get the reward you want. A habit is a choice you make that becomes part of you. You no longer need to think about a habit. You just do it. A habit can be very good or very bad. This week we look at powerful habits that will help a wise manager be a success in doing God's work.



Daniel's life shows what good habits are. Daniel made a habit of praying every day.

GOOD HABIT: PUTTING GOD FIRST (Matthew 6:33)

We all have our own ways of doing things. We call these habits. The question is: What kind are they? Good habits or bad ones? For a Christian, seeking God first every day is the most important habit of all.

“Every morning give yourself to God. Give your soul, body, and spirit to serve Him. Practice habits that show your deep love for God. Trust more and more in your Savior.” —Ellen G. White, *Mind, Character [Who someone is], and Personality*, volume 1, page 15, adapted. Give yourself to God each morning. It is a good habit. When we give ourselves to God each morning, we will be able to enter through the very small door “that leads to life that lasts forever” (Matthew 7:14, NLV).

God said, “‘Do not put any other gods in place of me’” (Exodus 20:3, NIV). Jesus said to “‘put God’s kingdom first. Do what he wants you to do’” (Matthew 6:33, NIV). We also have been told: “‘When you look for me with all your heart, you will find me’” (Jeremiah 29:13, NIV).

Read Matthew 22:37, 38; Acts 17:28; Ephesians 5:15–17; and Colossians 3:23. How do these verses help us put God first in our lives?

Jesus is the best example of how to put God first. Jesus put His Father in heaven before everything. Luke tells us that Jesus put His Father first during His visit to Jerusalem as a Child. Jesus’ mother went looking for Him and found Him in the temple. He said to her, “‘Why did you have to look for me? You should have known that I must be where my Father’s work is!’” (Luke 2:49, ICB).

Jesus wanted to be near His Father His whole life. Jesus’ prayer life shows us that Jesus wanted to feel very close to His Father. Jesus made it a habit to stay fully connected to His Father. How did He do it? Jesus prayed. Then evil powers could not separate Jesus from His Father.

We can do what Jesus did. We can choose to love God with all our hearts, minds, and souls (Matthew 23:37). We can pray, study the Bible, and try to be the same as Jesus in everything we do. These things will help us make a habit of putting God first in our lives.



Jesus made it a habit to stay fully connected to His Father. How did He do it? Jesus prayed.

Have you put God first in your life? How do you know?

**GOOD HABIT: LOOK FOR THE COMING OF JESUS
(Luke 12:35–48)**

Read the picture story in Luke 12:35–48. What does this picture story teach us about how we must think and feel about the Second Coming of Jesus? Why must the way we live always show that we believe the Second Coming is real?

We should be good managers of God’s gifts to us because Jesus is coming back. People will know who the bad managers are because of their evil behavior. But loyal managers will do everything God asks. In fact, good managers will work as if Jesus Himself stood at their sides. Every day they work hard to show how loyal they are to God. “But we are citizens of heaven. And we can hardly [not easy to do] wait for a Savior from there. He is the Lord Jesus Christ” (Philippians 3:20, NIV).

Abraham looked for a city that lasts forever (Hebrews 11:10). Paul looked for Jesus to come back (Hebrews 10:25). These men were always thinking about, hoping, and planning to meet Jesus at any minute. We also must make a habit of always looking forward to meeting Jesus (Titus 2:13). At the same time, we must avoid false ideas about what will happen at the end of time. God’s promise of the Second Coming points us to the right path for our lives. This path leads us to heaven. God’s promise of the Second Coming gives us a deeper understanding of what is happening on earth right now. God’s promise of the Second Coming also helps us to remember what is important in life. So, we must make a habit of looking for Jesus to come back. It gives us a reason for living and makes us better managers.

The Cross made a way for us to meet Jesus at the Second Coming. The Bible tells us to be on the lookout for special things that will happen before Jesus comes back. These things show us that the coming of Jesus is near. He will come in the glory of the Father and with angels (Mark 8:38). Then everything will be made new. “The things that can be seen will come to an end. But the things that cannot be seen will last forever” (2 Corinthians 4:18, NIV).

Death is very real and happens all the time around us. Death helps us remember that our time on earth is short. But God’s promise of the Second Coming shows us that death will not last forever. The truth of the Second Coming should help change our lives. So, let us make a habit of looking for Jesus’ Second Coming.



Let us make a habit of looking for Jesus’ Second Coming.

GOOD HABIT: USE TIME WISELY (Job 8:9)

“ ‘Our days on this earth are like [the same as] a shadow that disappears’ ” (Job 8:9, NIV)

You can stop a clock. But you cannot stop time. Time does not wait for anyone. Time always moves forward. What if we stood without moving and did nothing? What would happen to time? Time would just keep running.

Read James 4:14; Psalm 90:10, 12; Psalm 39:4, 5; and Ecclesiastes 3:6–8. What is the basic message of these verses? How do they help us understand that our time on earth is such a precious gift?

Our time on earth is limited because we must die. Our time to live will run out if Jesus does not come back first. We cannot get more time. So, Christians must be good managers of time. We should make a habit of using our time wisely. We must use our time to do the things that the Bible says are important. We cannot get time back after it is gone. We can lose the money we invest and later get it back. We might even get more money back than what we lost. But time is not the same. A minute lost is a minute lost forever. We cannot get back even one second from our past. We could more easily put a broken egg back in its shell. So, time is one of our most precious gifts from God. It is very important that we make a good habit of using wisely every minute of the time that God gives us.

“Our time belongs to God. Every moment is His. We have a duty to improve it. Then God will receive praise and honor. God has given us many talents. But God expects us to do more with our gift of time than with any other gift He gives us. We will need to give Him reasons for why we used our time the way we did.

“We cannot understand fully how valuable time is. Jesus felt every minute was precious. We should feel every minute is precious too. Life is too short to waste on things that are not important. We have only a little time on this earth to prepare for heaven. So, we have no time to waste. We have no time to give to selfish pleasure. We have no time to sin.”—Ellen G. White, *Christ's [Jesus'] Object Lessons*, page 342, adapted.



You cannot stop time. So, Christians must be good managers of time.

What does Paul teach us in Ephesians 5:15, 16?

GOOD HABIT: TAKING CARE OF THE BODY, MIND, AND SOUL (Proverbs 14:30)

In the beginning, God made humans with minds, bodies, and souls that were healthy and perfect. Then sin ruined everything. The Good News about Jesus also includes the truth that God is working right now to make us new again.

Read Acts 3:21 and Revelation 21:1–5. What hope do we find in these verses? How should we live our lives while we wait for God to make all things new again?

Jesus never stopped working to improve the hearts, minds, and bodies of people around Him. He healed many people. Jesus' work shows us God's big plan to make everything new again at the end of time. Jesus' miracles show us how God wants us to be very healthy until He comes. So, wise managers will make a habit of improving their minds, bodies, and souls. They will live healthy lives. Let us now look at the reasons for making healthy habits.

First, the mind will grow stronger the more we use it. Make it a habit to "always think about what is true. Think about what is noble [good], right and pure [free from sin]. Think about what is lovely and worthy of respect" (Philippians 4:8, NIrV). These thoughts bring peace (Isaiah 26:3). "A peaceful heart gives life to the body" (Proverbs 14:30, NIrV). Think good thoughts. Good thoughts allow the mind to work in peace and good health.

Second, good health habits show we care about ourselves. Two good health habits are healthy eating and exercise. Exercise lowers blood pressure. Exercise also improves our mood. In fact, exercise will make you look and feel younger more than anything you could buy.

Third, good habits will give life to our souls. So, lift up your soul to God (Psalm 86:4, 5). Wait on Him to give you hope (Psalm 62:5). You will succeed at what you do when you "[follow] the truth" (3 John 3, NLV). Then your soul will "be without blame when our Lord Jesus Christ comes again" (1 Thessalonians 5:23, NLV).

What are some of your habits now? How could you improve these habits while you wait for Jesus to make all things new again?



Jesus' healing work shows us God's great plan to make everything new at the end of time.

GOOD HABIT: SELF-CONTROL (1 Corinthians 9:24–27)

Self-control is one of the most important habits a good manager can have. “God did not give us a spirit that makes us afraid. He gave us a spirit of power and love and self-control” (2 Timothy 1:7, ICB). The Greek word for self-control is *sophronismos*. This word is found in the Bible only one time. It is found in 2 Timothy 1:7. This word means “doing what must be done with a strong and healthy mind that will not turn away from following God’s rules.” Self-control helps us “know the difference between good and evil” (Hebrews 5:14, ICB). Self-control also helps us understand the best way to handle problems. Self-control helps us stay calm. Just look at Daniel. Daniel was thrown to lions. But he did not let his fear stop him from doing what was right. Samson was very different from Daniel. Samson did anything he wanted. Samson did not show much self-control or good sense. But Joseph did what was right in Potiphar’s house. Solomon was very different from Joseph. He worshiped other gods (1 Kings 11:4, 5).

Read 1 Corinthians 9:24–27. What does Paul say in these verses about self-control? What does self-control have to do with sharing the Good News? Why must those who share the Good News show self-control in their lives?

“People who do not know God do anything they want. False ideas and false stories are everywhere. Satan continues to invent more and more traps to destroy souls. Those people who want to become holy must obey God. They must learn self-control. The desires of the body must be brought under the control of the higher powers of the mind. Self-control is important. It allows us to understand and follow the holy truths of the Bible.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 101, adapted.

God chose you to “be holy in all that you do” (1 Peter 1:15, NIV). He commands us to “train [ourselves] to be godly [holy]” (1 Timothy 4:7, NIV). Good managers must train themselves to show self-control in everything they do. In the same way, good athletes or musicians train hard to become good at what they do. Self-control grows stronger with practice. God’s power will help us succeed.



Daniel was thrown to lions. But he did not let fear stop him from doing what was right.

How can God’s power help us become better managers?

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Enoch and Noah made it a habit to walk with God. They were loyal to God in a time when few people were loyal (Genesis 5:24; Genesis 6:9). Instead, the earth was filled with people who had no self-control. These people were cruel. They loved riches and the things on this earth more than God. But Enoch and Noah understood God’s loving-favor. They accepted God’s gift of mercy, forgiveness, and power over sin. So, Enoch and Noah were good managers of all God gave them to take care of.

In all times of the past, there have been men and women who were loyal to God. They walked with God just as Enoch and Noah did and Daniel and his friends did. They “knew that the only way they could share the truth was to have clear minds and holy lives. They stood as witnesses of true religion among false religions. God Himself taught Daniel and his friends. He was their Teacher. Daniel and his friends always prayed, studied, and talked with the One [God] who cannot be seen. These things helped them to walk with God as Enoch did.”—Ellen G. White, *Prophets [Special Messengers] and Kings*, page 486, adapted.

Walking with God is a word picture that explains the actions of a wise manager. *Walking with God* means living with God every day of our lives. A wise manager will make a habit of walking with God on this evil earth. A daily connection with God protects us from the power of sin.

How do we become loyal managers? We must begin by agreeing with God and walking with Him (Amos 3:3). The actions of a loyal manager include every part of our lives. So, we must live our lives in Jesus (Colossians 2:6). We must get new lives from Him (Romans 6:4). We must live our lives with love (Ephesians 5:2). We must be wise (Colossians 4:5). We must live in the light of God’s truth (Psalm 86:11; 1 John 1:7). We must have honor (Proverbs 19:1). We must obey God’s law (Exodus 16:4). We must do good works (Ephesians 2:10). We always must choose to do what is right (Proverbs 4:26).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1 Read Matthew 11:29; Ephesians 4:2; and Philippians 2:3. Why do these verses say it is wrong to be proud?
- 2 How can we help people who are fighting bad habits?
- 3 What are other habits good managers should have? (Read Titus 2:7 and Matthew 5:8 for answers.)



Enoch made it a habit to walk with God.