

Southern Asia Division 2

Stewardship Certification *Handout*



Stewardship in the End Time

Aim: To show the pertinence of the stewardship message for believers who are living in this last generation.

Introduction

The SDA Church has Stewardship as a fundamental belief, and there are regular initiatives to educate members in stewardship (Ex. Sabbath School quarterly on Stewardship). What is the rationale behind this interest in stewardship? They are multiple. Our presentation concentrates on financial stewardship in the context of the Three Angels' Messages.

The Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Belief 21 states the following:

We are God's stewards, entrusted by Him with time and opportunities, abilities and possessions, and the blessings of the earth and its resources. We are responsible to Him for their proper use. We acknowledge God's ownership by faithful service to Him and our fellow men, and by returning tithes and giving offerings for the proclamation of His gospel and the support and growth of His church. Stewardship is a privilege given to us by God for nurture in love and the victory over selfishness and covetousness. The steward rejoices in the blessings that come to others as a result of his faithfulness. ([Gen. 1:26-28](#); [Gen. 2:15](#); [1 Chron. 29:14](#); [Haggai 1:3-11](#); [Mal. 3:8-12](#); [1 Cor. 9:9-14](#); [Matt. 23:23](#); [2 Cor. 8:1-15](#); [Rom. 15:26, 27](#).)

Fundamental Belief 21 highlights 3 key concepts of biblical stewardship:

- God is the _____ of everything through creation and redemption.
- Believers are created and redeemed to be _____ of God's properties.
- It is expected that believers are found _____ in their management.

Participants' Involvement

Read the Three Angels' Messages in Revelation 14:6-13. Discuss the Stewardship message which is found in the Three Angels' Messages.

Part I: The Master Manipulator

Babylon's seduction is a primary reason for stewardship education in the last days. The Bible portrays Babylon, both historic and prophetic, as a major threat to God's people (Jer. 52, Rev. 18: 24). Besides the power of arms, Babylon recurses, through history, to more insidious strategies to attain his finality of destroying God's people.

Referring to the story of Daniel and his three companions, we learn about the treatments received by the Hebrew boys in Ancient Babylon. Babylon adopted contrasting attitudes towards the Hebrew boys:

- The _____ of Babylon. Babylon uprooted them from their homeland and threw them into the fiery furnace and the lion's den.
- The _____ of Babylon. The captives were treated as little princes, invited to eat at the king's table!

Babylon is not a bipolar entity! The purpose of Babylon remains unchanged. Either through _____ or _____, Babylon is pursuing the same agenda of destroying God's people. _____ and _____ are parts of its ammunition.

We read in Revelation 14:8 about the manipulative scheme of prophetic Babylon.

“A second angel followed and said, “Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great,^[a] which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries.” (NIV)

“Babylon^[b] is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.” (NKJV)

Three pieces of information are conveyed in this passage:

- Babylon served _____ (Rev. 17:2,4); _____ (Prov. 20:1; Rev. 18:23).
- Babylon leads people to _____ ; _____ (Hosea 5:3; Isa. 1:21; Ez. 16:15; 23:1)
- Babylon has a far-reaching influence (Rev. 17:1,15).

Deception is the instrument of the manipulator. Effective manipulation depends on the capacity of the manipulator to ensure that the target of the manipulation does not perceive the lie. Babylon excels in manipulation and deception, as its king (Isaiah 14:3,12) is the father of lies (John 8:44). However, the prowess of the manipulator alone is never sufficient for the manipulation to succeed. Manipulation thrives on existing _____ in the one being manipulated.

Ellen White provides an insightful definition of Babylon:

“The term Babylon, derived from Babel, and signifying confusion, is applied in Scripture to the various forms of false or apostate religion.” Ellen G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 4, 232-33)

Part II: The Master Scheme of Babylon

Participants' Involvement

Find out what these passages have in common: Revelation 18:11, 15, 19

These passages identify Babylon as the source of economic prosperity (Rev.18:11,15,19) and for this reason the kings and inhabitants are saddened and furious about the fall of Babylon.

Stefanovic observes that “*The seduced nations associate themselves with Babylon for the purpose of _____ security and _____*” (Revelation of Jesus Christ, 2002, p. 449). Resistance to this influence bears financial consequences (Rev.13:17). Babylon functions by appealing to the human desire for material gain.

The last-day terrain resonates well with Babylon’s manipulative scheme:

- Paul tells us that in the last days, people are “lovers of themselves” and its first manifestation is “lovers of money” (2 Tim. 3:1-2).
- Ellen White makes a similar observation: “Covetousness is one of the most common and popular sins of the last days and has a paralyzing influence upon the soul.” (*Testimonies for the Church* Vol. 3, p. 547.2 (1872-1875)].
- Our society attaches some high symbolical values to money:
 - Money as _____
 - Money as _____
 - Money as _____
 - Money as _____
 - Money as an access pass to _____.

This allurements for wealth contributes to the power of seduction of Babylon. It creates situations of dual allegiance among many Christians. Many continue to come to God for salvation, but they work for their living by themselves and by using all available Babylonian schemes. We can observe several financial practices among believers that violate God’s clear instructions.

Participants’ Involvement

Think of some examples of getting rich strategies that are violating God’s instructions.

When God is not acknowledged as the source of blessing, it is unlikely for someone to honor God with the acquired riches. As a result, money is in good position to compete with God for worship.

Read Matthew 6:24:

Babylon is achieving its goal of diverting people away from worshipping the creator God.

Part III: Stewardship helps us to stand in resistance

There is a call to get out of Babylon (Rev. 18:4). Does it mean only a change of our religious affiliation? Much more, it involves resisting the manipulation of Babylon, including in issues of finances. In our collective consciousness, financial prosperity has become synonymous with happy living. Stewardship helps us to place finances in the right perspective and hence breaks its spell over us.

Babylon's Manipulation	Stewardship Principles
Money provides status.	Our identity is in _____ to God (2 Cor. 6:18).
Money provides freedom.	Real freedom is in _____ (Gal. 5:1).
Money provides security.	God is our _____ (Ps. 28:7).
Money is the access pass to love.	You are _____ loved (Jer. 31:3).
Use all available strategies for your financial well-being.	God gives the _____ to produce wealth (Deut. 18:8)
Abundant life is the result of possessions.	Abundant life is a _____ from God (John 10:10).
The pathway to happiness is to receive.	Real happiness is in the _____ of others (Acts 20:35).
Craving for more is normal.	Cultivate _____ as a virtue (1 Tim. 6:6).

How does one cultivate contentment? Contentment is nourished by a spirit of thankfulness. God has a prescription to combat the drive of always seeking for more:

“Constant, self-denying _____ is God’s remedy for the cankering sins of selfishness and covetousness.” (3TC 548.1).

Giving out regularly strengthens our resistance to Babylon.

Conclusion

Stewardship education helps believers to deconstruct the popular worldviews about finances and escape from the enticement of Babylon. We can therefore give undivided worship to the Creator God.

Read More:

- J. Kovar, *Systematic Benevolence*, <https://encyclopedia.adventist.org/article?id=5JHL>
- A. Barbe, *Babylon: The Manipulator*, <https://adventistreview.org/magazine-article/babylon-the-manipulator/>