

Counting Our Benefits

#0308

Study Given by W. D. Frazee—April 20, 1977

I happen to notice a very interesting article in last week's Review. And I thought I'd share a couple of paragraphs from it with you because it's quite meaningful. Maybe some of you noticed it; it's about the strangler fig. It's a type of plant that grows on another plant. It's in Florida and other subtropical or tropical places. It starts out very small and innocent and eventually takes the life of the host.

Well, the author of this article, along with a photograph of the tree, made a little parable and put it in the Review:

Some years ago, a small group of men planted a sapling. They gave it a name. A Seventh-day Adventist institution. It wasn't much to look at compared with the stately trees around it, but the men had moved great boulders of difficulty to clear a place for it, and had strained every muscle to prepare the soil for it.

Now that it was planted, they viewed it with admiration. Lovingly, they cared for it, warding off pests and diseases and watering it with their sweat and tears. The little tree responded to their care. What's the name of this tree? A Seventh-day Institution. The little tree responded to their care and began to grow and flourish, sinking its roots deep in an invisible union with Christ. It soon began to bear the sweet fruits of self-sacrifice, kindness, and love.

Each year, it grew taller and spread its branches wider until birds, beasts, and men found refreshment under its cooling shade. Though still young, the tree gave nourishment, shelter, and support to many forms of life. Soon, it held an honored place among the stately trees of the community. But as it was reaching maturity, a bird deposited an evil seed called "selfishness" in an upper fork of the tree. In some slimy black leaf-mold, the seed sprouted and sent a long, thin root named "the idler" down the trunk of the tree.

"It's great living off this tree," said the idler, goofing off while appearing to be busy giving a half-hour's work for an hour's pay.

“You would never catch me working overtime. I believe in starting late and quitting early and having a good time in between.” The idler sent out many branch roots, and soon his name became legion.

Meanwhile, another root called “the demander” had already reached the ground and thickened into a trunk. “This tree, a Seventh-day Adventist institution, is so large and rich that it owes me a living, reasoned the demander. “I am going to get all I can out of it.” Soon, he launched a campaign of complaining that sounded something like this. “Salaries around here are woefully inadequate. If I don’t get a substantial raise, I’m going to quit.”

The caretakers looked at the demander’s sturdy trunk and glossy green leaves. “This trunk is giving strong support to the tree,” they decided, not noticing that it was an alien growth. “To cut it off would involve great loss. We’d better yield to its demands.” But as the demander flourished, it grew ever *more* demanding, and it spread widely over the tree.

And then the parable goes on with some other roots. That’s in the Review of April 14, 1977.

Well, it’s interesting, isn’t it? And of course, the people that wrote that and published it, they didn’t know about any work we’re doing here or any problems we have here. But that’s an interesting parable, isn’t it? An interesting parable. And it will bear study.

The thing that I wanted to spend a little time in just talking over with you this evening is the various ways in which the Lord recompenses us, or compensates us.

“The Lord can bring matters around so that a blessing will attach to our labors far exceeding any compensation we may or may not receive” *Selected Messages*, Book 2, page 205.

Now there are blessings that the Lord has that He wants to share with us that far exceed any compensation we may or may not receive. So I thought we might just meditate on that a little. Would you like to think about that a little?

I was thinking of what some of them might be. Are there people that work 48 or 49 or 50 weeks out of the year in order to go to someplace as beautiful as this campus and spend a couple of weeks? Are there? Oh yes. I remember when I was in city evangelistic work in a large city in the middle west. And I remember after I had been

there a year, working hard, living in the city, my wife and I had two weeks' vacation. Do you know what we did? We headed for the place out of the plains where we could see some hills and mountains and enjoyed a couple of weeks.

Well, here I get that (I was going to say 52 weeks a year, I don't get it 52 because sometimes I have to be away from the campus). But the only way I can *miss* it is to be away from this campus. Is that right? I have lived in 20 different locations on this campus. And every one of them gave me a beautiful view—"a million-dollar view" if I may phrase it that way—a million-dollar view.

Now, if any of you are living where you don't have a million-dollar view, I wish you'd talk to me about it and see if we can't get you in one of the places where I have lived because it's all around. I'm simple-minded enough to believe that the Lord planned for this campus when Noah was cruising around with the Ark. That's when these particular mountains and hills were arranged. Weren't they?

Do you know we have something unusual here in the topography of these 600 acres? Most of the mountain chains in North America run which way? North and south, like Lookout Mountain here, for instance. Now, if we were right up on the sides of Lookout Mountain, if we were here on the west side just above Lookout Creek, you know we wouldn't get any early morning sun. We would get an afternoon sun but not the early morning. Right? Yes.

But suppose we were over on the *other* side. Well, we would get the early morning sun, but we'd miss it in the afternoon. But the way God has spread out this Raccoon Mountain with its fingers reaching out here in our campus, we get the sun at a fairly early hour as it comes across Lookout, and then all day long we get it. That's why we have these beautiful hepaticas up these waterways in the wintertime. They enjoy that sunshine. Well, I do, too.

I think these are among the blessings that God gives us in addition to any money we may or may not have. Money is only a medium of exchange, you know. That's all it's good for. We can't eat it, can we? Not unless we're billy goats. I saw a goat try to swallow a \$20 bill once. They worked fast and got it away. The problem would have been whether it was worth it to carve the goat up to get the twenty dollars back, you understand.

My point is, we can't eat money. Even if it was actual gold, we can't eat it, can we? No. We can't *wear* money. All money is good for is a medium of exchange. And it is possible for human beings, millions of them are doing it, it's possible to get the mind on the medium of exchange and miss what it's all about. It's possible to be thinking about the means rather than the end.

May I tell you something? I have been here for 35 years. And during part of that time, none of us got any stipends at all. That's what it took to get this work started. God has helped me to stay out of debt. And I have seen other people stay out of debt. I have seen a few people *get* out of debt on this program. I don't recommend it to you as a place to get out of debt. The economic system here is not devised to get people out of debt, but the promises of God can usually *keep* us out of debt, barring some emergency, and the Lord takes care of that.

But what I wanted to say is this. I have seen the Lord take this little work and increase it from year to year in its influence, in its ability to help many people, and I have seen Him add His blessing to the humble efforts of the sacrificial workers. And dear friends, one of the greatest compensations that I have received is the joy of seeing that happen. When I see little children playing amid the flowers or on the grass or up these woodland trails, it makes me happy. I know that their parents are rich.

When I was in New York City holding meetings, I looked out the window of our Manhattan church down in the main part of New York City, and there in an apartment next door was a little shelf-like porch where two little children were playing. That was their playground, maybe 30 square feet. There are literally millions of children in New York City that are in that kind of case or worse.

Well, thank God, I repeat, for the little children that have a place to play like the lambs in the pasture. How do you put a money value on that, dear fathers and mothers? How do you put a money value on that? I don't know how to, but I thank the Lord for it. And instead of having to earn the money to enable us to go to a place once a year, twice a year, to enjoy something like that, we can spend our time in serving Jesus by serving suffering humanity, and God puts that in as a bonus without us having to handle any money to make that possible. Do you follow me? Yes.

But now that's just *two* of the things. I mentioned the view. I mentioned the place to play for the children. You remember that *Medical Ministry* page 308 speaks of the benefit of a rural base for city workers. It speaks of a place where fruit and vegetables might be raised for the benefit of the workers. The benefit.

Now let's see. What are some of the benefits there? If you want to figure them in financial ways, you might say, "Well, so many pounds of greens and so many heads of lettuce, or so many bushels of tomatoes, or so many pints of strawberries at so much."

But I don't like to think of it that way, because you know that pint of strawberries is worth just as much to me whether they are selling in the market for 30 cents or 60 cents, aren't they? What's the benefit to me? I was looking at that tongue on that chart when I came in. I thought that has quite a capacity for enjoyment, a tongue that size,

doesn't it? But do you know the President in the White House will not get as nice strawberries to eat as *I'll* get in a few weeks? Do you know why? Well, he doesn't have any strawberry plants on the White House grounds. At least I don't *think* he has. If he does, maybe he will.

But there is something about a strawberry that the shorter the time between the vine and the tongue, the greater the pleasure. And I suppose the greater the nutrition value too. Right? Yes. Now how do you put a money value on that? Well, you know, if I were the Devil, I would be slipping around and whispering in somebody's ear, "That's just a little tranquilizer that Brother Frazee is passing out just now."

But friends, I'd hate to get so interested in the money with which to go to the red market and *buy* strawberries that I miss the joy of growing and picking and eating the strawberries *here*. Do you see what I'm getting at? And I do this without having to handle what? Money. Of course, I will tell you, if a fellow has a great thrill in just handling money, I suppose we could arrange to put him in the Business Office, couldn't we? Sometimes quite a bit comes through.

But most of the money that I see, either in peoples or in institution's hands, it's like water—it's flowing through. It's just going from one side to the other. Isn't it? Yes. Even the government of the United States that deals in billions of dollars, it's coming in one side and going out the other. Unfortunately, the government hasn't found how to generate enough. They have to *borrow* all the time. I am glad I'm not that rich.

I would rather be poor and out of debt and have the strawberries and the million-dollar view and the place for the children to play. All right. Now let's think of a few other things. Do you find this interesting what I'm talking about?

Now I intend this only as just a kind of a little "priming the pump." If you will work on it in your own thinking and praying, you will think of a dozen other things that I haven't had time to mention tonight. But I got to thinking. You know, there are people who spend anywhere from five to ten dollars every Friday night to come here to our Vespers service. Did you know that? I mean, it *costs* them that. I am not talking about the time. I am talking about the money that it takes to get from where they are over here and then get home again. It costs them from five to ten dollars. Well, you add that up for a few weeks, and it begins to count up, doesn't it?

Well, I get that without having to spend that you understand. Don't you? Is it something to think about? And all these things that I have told about so far, none of them are subject to any income tax, you understand. Is that right? Yes. If I went out in the world and *earned* the money to get my children the beautiful playground, and if I went out and *earned* the money to buy the beautiful strawberries (even though they wouldn't be as fresh as the ones I get), and if I went out and *earned* the money to get

me the place with the beautiful view, and if I went out and *earned* the money to get the five to ten dollars that it takes to attend Vespers from a distance, if I did all that, I would have to earn quite a bit, wouldn't I? And nine times out of ten, I'd be in something that I wouldn't enjoy as much as what I'm doing. All these are bonuses. Should I thank the Lord for those things?

Now let's see, I was thinking about something else. Do you know there are places where you can go and attend classes? You can pay anywhere from so much on up to so much for the privilege of attending one of those classes. Are any of you here attending classes? How many of you are? Why yes, nearly everybody, faculty and students. You know, one thing I have always been interested in here at Wildwood, you can go and attend a class, and a visitor couldn't tell who are faculty and who are students because so many of our classes some of the faculty are attending. Do you know why? Well, for the same reason they come to the table, they enjoy what's served.

Now suppose that I were in a situation where I had to go and earn the money to pay the tuition for those classes. Would it increase the value of the class any? No. In some cases, it might even have the *opposite* effect. But we will just put it on an even basis. Do you see what I'm getting at? Is the class I'm attending just as valuable even though I don't handle money? Yes. And remember, if you add all these things together, pretty soon you get in an income tax level. And then you have to generate more income than what it is you are generating income for. Do you follow me? Yes.

If you are generating 50 dollars, you might have to generate 60 or 70 or 80 or 90 dollars, depending on the bracket, in order to have what is left, the take-home pay, in order to buy the thing that you are going after.

“The Lord can bring matters around so that a blessing will attach to our labors far exceeding any compensation we may or may not receive” *Ibid*.

But I'll tell you the biggest privilege we have, dear friends, it's fellowship with Jesus, partnership with Him in doing a work that we know that He wants done and that He has called us to. This is what got into the heart of Peter and John and caused them to leave their fishing boats on the Sea of Galilee without any offer from Jesus as to what compensation they would receive.

This is what got into the heart of Matthew and led him to leave government service and devote his time to the Master. And do you know that every one of those people, except Judas Iscariot, poor fellow, he lost out, but all the others stayed with it till they lost their lives on that job? Didn't they? Every *one* of them. I wonder what it was that attracted them. It was love—love for Jesus.

Now we shouldn't judge others. God calls various people at various places. We have to leave that with the individual and God. But dear ones, if, in any sense, to any degree, finances are a factor in your being here, God may allow circumstances to arise that will make it easy for you to be where finances are larger. Because there are many places. Aren't there? Yes.

I would be glad to help any of you find a place where you could work for God and still get more money than you get here. I am not sure that I could guarantee that in the same package you would get all these, shall I say, "side benefits." To me, they are not side benefits. Whatever money there happens to spray around, that's the side benefit. And if it doesn't come, okay. But oh, thank God, for a place to live in the country, for food that's raised from the soil, and I didn't stop to point out the great blessing that comes to us in working the soil, and the blessing that comes in walking up and down these hills and over these valleys. Bless God for all of it. But the main thing, the great thing, is the knowledge that we are in partnership with the Lord of glory. What do you say?

How many of you folks here tonight, whether you have students in your home or not, are home heads? That is, you do the ordering for your home. May I see your hands? Yes. I wish every home on the place were here tonight. I have just a little word to say to you. I have been in home setups here at Wildwood all the way from two to twenty-five people. I know what it is to have two people sit at the table, and I'm one of them. Three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve. I haven't missed a one of them, and so on up to twenty-five. Yes, I can go higher than that, thirty-five, so I know what that is. And there are advantages to each one.

My suggestion to you is, enjoy the advantage that you have where you are. If there are only two people at your place, enjoy that while you have it. It may not always last. If you have got sixteen, get all the joy out of that. That may not last either. You may sometime be reduced to two or half a dozen. Wherever you are, get the joy.

You know, I told you I was over at Stonecave last week. I saw something very interesting. In fact, it was fascinating. I stood at my window and watched it. There was a large pasture there; it must have been ten acres. A barbed-wire fence was between the home I was staying in and this pasture. And the pasture was lush with grass, and there were maybe a half a dozen horses in it. There was one horse, bless his heart; do you know what he was doing? He had his long neck clean clear across that barbed wire, and he was eating the grass outside the pasture. And behind him was more grass than he could have eaten in a week, you understand.

But that was especially good, do you know why? It was where he wasn't. I want to encourage you to enjoy the home where you are in and the size of the home you are in, little or big or in between.

Now on this budget thing. You know, I have been on little budgets and big budgets and no budgets. Some of our fellow workers in Lythia and New Hampshire and several other places know what that is periodically and sometimes perennially. But I wanted to drop this little word. We have a commissary over here at Haskell Hall. What's it for? Is it a service? Yes. Is it a part of the institution, just as much as the hospital and the farm and the recordings and all the rest? Is that right? Yes.

Now human individuality is an interesting thing. It exhibits itself in various ways. I could take ten minutes on this, but I am only going to take about a minute. My suggestion to you is: Think of how much you can help the commissary strengthening its work rather than thinking of how you can save a nickel by spending a dollar to run to town to buy something.

There are two reasons I would like to have you do that. The one is, the commissary is a part of the institution. But the second reason is more important, you are part of it. And it's a wonderful thing when, as leaders in a home, in a department, we are more interested in the institution as a whole and the program as a whole than we are in what we personally are connected with.

The apostle Paul says:

"Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others" Philippians 2:4.

Recently, the administration in study of the work made a plan whereby people are given the opportunity to spend more or less money at the commissary. Provision is made that they get more in script if they spend it at the commissary. But be that as it may. My point is, nearly every home has, from time to time, certain things that can be purchased only with U. S. cash. Study how to keep that at a minimum for the benefit of the institution. I'm not talking about pinching the penny. I am talking about developing and encouraging an attitude in which we think when we are making a decision, Will this benefit the institution? How is the way to strengthen it?

I was thinking about it. Suppose my wife had bought some things. There they are in the pantry. And I look at them, and I say, "You know, I don't really care too much for that, and I am not going to eat at this house any longer until you go and buy something else." You wouldn't expect me to do that, would you? No.

The commissary is our pantry, dear folks. If the commissary gets stuck with something, I don't know that it is, I haven't asked them, and nobody has asked me to give this little word, but if the *commissary* gets stuck with something, then *I'm* stuck with it. And I want to help eat it up. What do you say? Do you see what I'm getting at? It's

a part of this family spirit.

Now I am going to share something with you that just came to my desk. I want to tell you about a country many thousands of miles away from here. I am not even going to tell you the name of the country. Our brethren have asked that we be very careful about any reports we give of this, and suggest that if we say anything about it, we say it in a way that won't make it any harder for our people in that country.

This particular country achieved its independence just a few years ago. Our people in that country thought that when this country achieved its independence that it would be a glorious opportunity for spreading the message more than ever. They already had several thousand believers in there under the old government. They thought the *new* government would be more liberal. And the constitution that was adopted proclaimed full religious liberty to everybody. And so they were all so happy.

Then one day, the government declared all land in the country to be the property of the state without prior notice, without compensation, without appeal. And with the speed of lightning, it nationalized all medical and educational work. Our mission lost two new medical dispensaries.

What happened to all the medical and educational work in that country? Nationalized. With the speed of lightning and with no prior notice. This is what happened.

But that wasn't all. Presently, the screws began to get tightened a bit more. One day, a young literature evangelist, going from door to door with our literature, knocked at a door in a residential section, and he was offering for sale two of our books. The man refused to take any interest in it. He tried to enroll him in a Bible course, and he refused that. As he went to the next house and was engaged in the same work, the man at the first house came over and identified himself as a criminal investigator from the police department and took this young man to prison.

The following day, the union mission president and the publishing director decided to try to find out more about this. So, the publishing director invited another pastor to go with him, and they went down to this police station to learn why the colporteur had been arrested. When they arrived, they found that this man was being interrogated. And learning who it was that had come, they started in to interrogate them and arrested *them* on the spot.

Later in the day, when the union president returned, he went down to the police department to find out what had happened, and they arrested *him*. So they put them in prison. And to not take all evening to tell you the rest of the story, those people were in prison for 182 days. And one of them was a citizen of another country. But that didn't

protect him from it.

Part of that time, they had very poor food. Later, the Lord arranged it so some of their relatives could bring them *better* food. That came through their ministry as medical missionaries. They had many providences and were able to witness like Paul and Silas did in the jail, and they saw the police wearing their watches and using their things. They had all been taken from them.

But finally, after 182 days, they were released and expelled from the country with no possibility of going back. Others of our people are still in prison in that country.

May we pray?

Our Father in Heaven, we pray for our brethren in this unnamed country far across the seas. We thank Thee for using even persecution to spread the good news of the Gospel. We thank Thee for men and women who are willing to witness even when it means suffering and imprisonment and torture and even death. We pray that Thou wilt prepare us in this little moment of respite, in this little time of comparative peace here in this country. Prepare us to be willing to witness with our lives if necessary to be martyrs for Thee. Help us in the little trials and crosses from day to day that we may now get ready to meet the larger tests.

And Lord, I thank Thee that Thou art doing it. I thank Thee for the witness of these dear physicians, and nurses, and farmers, and cooks, and bookkeepers, and teachers, and housewives, and mothers, and all the rest that make up our Wildwood family. I thank Thee for the loving care our patients are receiving. I thank Thee for the blessing that comes to these men and women who visit this campus to receive physical healing and mental relief and spiritual blessing. Lord, continue to pour into our hearts the golden oil of love that it may flow out in our ministrations.

Dear Lord, I pray that Thou wilt bless those on our campus who are having particular problems, whether they be problems of health, or problems of finance, or any other kind of problem. Just now, lay Thy loving hand in blessing. Assure them of Thy love and the love of their brothers and sisters. Teach us how to look around us and find those needier than ourselves whether in money or comfort or courage or whatever. Teach us how to be to others what Jesus was to His disciples. Make up our deficiencies, and gladden our hearts with the sense of Thy presence, the joy of partnership with Thee. We ask it in Jesus' wonderful name, amen.

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