



DYNAMIC

Steward

Exploring Partnership with God

Don't call for an offering; call for a commitment to the rightful Owner of all things.

Offering call?

It's like the farmer who had a cow that wasn't giving much milk, the man said in response to my question at a seminar—What's the first thing that pops into your mind when I say the word, 'Offering?' I thought to myself What does a farmer and a cow have to do with offering?

Most everyone else there answered *Money*. But, the stewardship concept was introduced to Adam and Eve before the fall when money didn't exist! God was owner of all things and man was caretaker of all things.

The farmer decided to find out why milk production was so low, continued the eager participant, so he began looking for ways to remedy the situation.

Adam and Eve bit off more forbidden fruit than they could chew. In the beat of a broken heart, earth's first caretakers discovered that, to survive, they had to begin owning things. House, land, utensils, flocks, servants, and finally stock portfolios became the rule by which stewardship was measured. *Things* became *blessings*; *Stewardship* became *money*. Today, those ancient roles seem to be reversed. Man owns and then pays God to protect and nurture the estate.

The farmer began spending time with his cow, bringing it grass to eat and making sure the water flowing into its drinking trough was clean and fresh.

Why did God create a distinction between owner and steward? It's a lot harder to own something than to simply care for it. Ownership brings added responsibilities—work and stress were never intended to be laid upon the shoulders of human beings. People who have much always want more—Have you seen individuals neglecting the wealth they've gathered in a pursuit of obtaining the wealth other people have gathered? Sinful human beings make lousy owners.

The farmer discovered that the more attention he paid to his cow, the more milk it gave. The cow was transforming kindness and care into what the farmer wanted—milk.

It's time for us to return to the Eden model of stewardship where money and possessions weren't the elements of exchange between owner and caretaker. Money isn't stewardship. It's a sin-created *part* of stewardship. Instead of begging milk from the cow, we farmers should spend more time with the herd, nurturing each member, making their world as comforting and nonthreatening as possible.

Don't call for an offering. People will simply drop a few coins. Instead, call for a commitment to the rightful Owner of all things. Present a clear picture of the source of all blessings. Then enjoy the benefits that will flow naturally from each thankful heart.

Charles Mills, Christian Communications, Berkeley Springs, West Virginia

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OFFERING

Application

Worship or collection?

Youth

Financial study for teens

Concept

A fresh look at giving

Sermons

A matter of trust
The people principle
Where's your treasure?

Book Reviews

Cries of the heart
LifeDirections
The forgotten trinity
Life essentials . . .

Application



Giving and the Gospel

Discipleship Resources
P O Box 840
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US\$ 14.95

Collecting an offering is an easy job. The organ begins to play. The deacons stand up together. Like drilled soldiers, they move in timed synchronization, passing the plate along from pew to pew. And this traditional, well-organized collection routine results in many dollar bills and handfuls of change—sometimes meeting the week’s budget, sometimes not.

But how do we go beyond the *collection*? How do we bring back the true meaning and practice of offerings? How do we put back the *worship* into our giving? It’s time to reeducate our members so that they may experience the joy of making their offerings acts of worship.

Invest some time to help your congregation learn the biblical concept of giving. Adults learn best in small groups, and there are many small group activities available that teach the biblical basics of giving. Here is an effective, no-cost method to begin a discussion of giving.

A comfortable atmosphere

Giving and the Gospel is a 9 ½-minute video testimonial of people and their feelings about giving—apprehensions about tithing, joy in giving, blessings in disguise, family traditions of giving, etc. This video is not a teaching device but a tool for reflection. When members hear stories similar to their own, they may feel more comfortable to share and confront their own feelings on giving.

The video comes with a *Leader’s Guide* that gives you all the help you need—from introducing the video to discussion questions that follow the viewing of the tape. The main issues addressed in the video are

- People who influence the decision to give
- Decision points about when to give
- Balance between money, talent, and time
- Tithing as a spiritual discipline
- Offering as an expression of worship
- The difference giving makes

Worship or collection?

Because this is a collection of testimonials of growing Christians—ordinary people expressing concerns and sharing personal practices,—there may be ideas in the videos that conflict with the beliefs and practice of your congregation. Therefore, it is important for the leader to use this as a tool to generate a healthy introspection of the congregation’s own concerns and not as a showcase of exemplary giving.

At the end of the *Leader’s Guide* are several follow-up options for continued studies.

Giving and the Gospel can be purchased for US\$ 14.95 plus shipping and handling from *Discipleship Resources*. They do not accept credit cards, but are able to bill you. Write for their complete list of resources or see it on the world wide web at www.gbod.org/stewardship



Giving & Tithing

Moody Press
820 N LaSalle St
Chicago, IL 60610
copyright 1998
phone: 312-329-2102
US\$ 6.99

Follow-up studies

Larry Burkett’s *Giving and Tithing* is an excellent book for members to use as a follow-up exercise to the *Gospel and Giving* video. This book is only 60 pages and is ideal for couples and families to be studied individually or as a group. It deals with real issues that interfere with giving. It gives biblical reason why we must give in spite of the issues.

The book brings home the truth that stewardship is more than a concept—that exists only when active, when we allow ourselves to be God’s vessels. Invest in this book for the growth of your congregation. Give each family a copy of it. Study it with them, and you will see the change.

Note: Is there something you use in your congregation that has been a blessing to both your members and the church? Send in your small group activities, studies, and resources to be included in this section of Dynamic Steward.

These days it is not unusual for our youth to begin adulthood with a burden of debt and the responsibility of credit cards. In the hurried pace of rearing and educating them, we have failed in equipping our youth with strong money management skills.

Crown Ministries, an interdenominational ministry that trains people to apply biblical financial principles to their lives, has a series of financial studies for different groups. This column focuses on the one for teens. (The other four studies are *The ABC's of Handling Money God's Way* for ages 7 and younger; *The Secret—Discovering God's Secret of Handling Money* for ages 8 through 12; *Biblical Financial Study—Collegiate Edition* for young adults; and *Biblical Financial Study* for adults.)

The Crown Ministries Financial Study for Teens, designed for 13- to 19-year olds, is written with plenty of practical applications and humorous illustrations relevant to teenagers. The package is designed for 12, 50-minute sessions, and has both a *Leader's Guide* and a *Teen Manual*. The study is versatile and can be used in any learning environment—church school, one-on-one, in a small group, in Sabbath School or at home. *Crown Ministries* recommends that each leader have no more than eight students.

Before each class students are required to memorize a scripture and complete a practical application and homework assignment—this takes approximately one hour outside of class. Because of the homework involved, every student needs to have his or her own *Teen Manual*.

This is a rigorous and systematic study of what Scripture teaches about managing money, covering topics such as earning an income, giving, saving, spending, investing and budgeting. Because of its well-defined structure and strong biblical themes, *Crown Ministries* has a training requirement for the leaders. The Teen Study teachers is required to study the first nine pages of the Leader's guide and listen to the audio cassette titled *How to lead the Crown Ministries Financial Study for Teenagers* in its entirety. (The Adult Study Leader is required to be a graduate from the small group study and take a six-hour training session.)



Financial Study for Teens

Crown Ministries Inc
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Longwood, FL 32750
Copyright 1997
phone: 407-331-6000
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www.crown.org
US\$ 15.00

Quotes on giving and offerings . . .

Christian giving is God's divine plan to make us like Himself; it reveals our religions and bares our souls; it is prophetic and has to do with the inner sensitiveness and gives a keener vision to His work and plans.—*Warren H Denison*

Even the very poor should bring their offerings to God. They are to be sharers of the grace of Christ by denying self to help those whose need is more pressing than their own. The poor man's gift, the fruit of self-denial, comes up before God as fragrant incense. And every act of self-sacrifice strengthens the spirit of beneficence in the giver's heart, allying him more closely to the One who was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich.—*Ellen White* (Acts of the Apostles, p 342)

God has given us two hands—one to receive with and the other to give with. We are not cisterns made for hoarding; we are channels made for sharing.—*Billy Graham*

Give what you have. To someone it may be better than you dare to think.—*Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*

Keep a little money box on the mantel or in some safe place where it can be seen, in which the children can place their offerings for the Lord. . . . Thus they may be trained for God.—*Ellen White* (Adventist Home, p 388)

The world asks, How much does he give. Christ asks, Why does he give?—*John Raleigh Mott*

If professing Christians would faithfully bring to God their tithes and offerings, His treasury would be full. There would then be no occasion to resort to fairs, lotteries, or parties of pleasure to secure funds for the support of the gospel.—*Ellen White* (Acts of the Apostles, p 338)

Concept



Giving and offerings mean different things to different people. And people give for many different reasons. But the real question is how should a church leader approach giving? If we simply appeal to human motives, we may reinforce the focus on self. If we do not present accurate information, we may disappoint or confuse people. There are two sides to giving. The one deals with the donor—the motives encouraging someone to give. The second side deals with leadership—those involved in asking people to give. Giving actually brings these two groups together. So how does a leader deal with giving?

First, we must remember that giving for a Christian is first an act of worship. The primary purpose for tithes or offerings is to give glory to God—to recognize Him as Creator and integrate Him into the material side of life. Appeals to traditional human motivations may actually reinforce chains of selfishness and sin. Thus, we must ask ourselves the following questions: Who is really owner of all that is in our hands? What does it mean for God to be Owner? What can you really give to God? Can we as Christians give anything more than our own hearts? What makes our tithe and offerings worship?

Truly all we have and are belongs to God. Tithe is worship when we recognize our relationship with God. Offerings are worship when, in partnership with Him, we invest God's money in His kingdom. They become an extension of our partnership with God. Without this partnership with God, we cannot worship Him with offerings—they are only payoffs. Offerings reflect our hearts and our experience with God, and are the result of the Holy Spirit's guidance in intimate partnership.

A fresh look at giving

The first challenge is to help people grow so that their giving is an extension of their faith walk with God. Giving without a faith relationship cannot be worship. Giving based on something other than the faith relationship and the assurance of salvation becomes false worship.

However, the way we present information is critical, even if people are growing spiritually. So here are some pointers to help a leader working with givers.

The best giving follows

1. The best giving follows vision, not duty. This vision must have a biblical origin. We don't have to wonder about God's vision—we can go to Scripture to discover it, and then articulate it in the contemporary context. A strong spiritual leader presents this vision in proportion to God's ability, and His ability to be involved with what His Church is doing. A biblical vision for ministry and the church provides the biblical leader a powerful foundation for helping members see what God is doing.

2. The best giving follows mission, not structure. It is hard for people to see God working through or in the structure of an organization. However, they easily see God in His commission to us to go into all the world and make disciples. Matthew 28:18-20 provides the clearest and most powerful mission a church could find. God promises to be with us *always, even unto the end of the world*. This assures us that in joining this mission, we walk with God in intimate partnership.

3. The best giving also follows people, not programs. God is, first of all a personal God, and we need a personal touch when working for Him. Thus, when working with members, we need to remember they respond to people better than to programs. Thus we need to be visible and real, and we need to maintain absolute and transparent integrity. We must also present the ministry or project we are asking them to support as people, not institutions or programs.

4. The best giving follows passion, not pressure. That means our hearts have to be involved, and we must have a personal commitment. At the same time we need to help our members become involved. Christianity is not about giving. It is about a passionate involvement with the Lord of the universe. True giving by a Christian comes as a result of a personal commitment to and heart involvement with this incredible God.

5. The best giving follows growth and progress, not maintenance. Many of our appeals focus on maintaining or repairing the status quo in either the organization or institution. Sometimes the appeal deals with a current crisis. Other

God is, first of all a personal God, and we need a personal touch when working for Him. Thus, when working with members, we need to remember they respond to people better than to program.

times, the appeal creates a sense of crisis in order to develop a greater sense of need. We need to remember that God has no losing causes. He sees the bigger picture, and He invites us into a growing adventure with Him.

6. The best giving follows information, not promotion. Only the Holy Spirit has the right to convict people on their giving. But we can help the Holy Spirit by providing information. That information must be complete, transparent and understandable. In today's world, what is unknown, misunderstood, or hidden, is automatically suspect. The spiritual leader who seeks to involve people in supporting God's kingdom will provide accurate information of what God is doing and how they can join with Him in His mission.

7. The best giving follows conviction, not manipulation. Only the Holy Spirit can bring that conviction. Only God can create the desire, and when He does, He gives the power to follow through on that conviction.

Giving is really managing God's investments!

It is time for us to go back to a biblical approach to raising money—to trusting God to work in people's lives and in their giving. He is the Owner Partner. We are managing partners. Everything belongs to God and we manage His investments in partnership with Him. We acknowledge that relationship through our tithes, and we invest directly in His kingdom. We manage His assets, and we invest them in His kingdom through offerings and in the way we care for our families.

I believe that spiritual leadership is partnering with God, and that when we invite others to partner with Him in joining what He is doing we are helping them join the most exciting thing in the universe—His Kingdom.

Benjamin C. Maxson, Director, General Conference Stewardship Department

*Offerings are
worship when,
in partnership
with Him,
we invest
God's money
in His
kingdom.*

Stewardship Window



Satellite training

An exciting new event took place September 4-12, 1999. The Euro-African Division sponsored the first stewardship training seminars to be up-linked and transmitted by satellite. Benjamin C. Maxson, Director of the General Conference Stewardship Department, was the presenter and trainer. The presentations were translated into 10 or more languages. Sabbath and Sunday each week involved a total of 18 hours of the seminar *Normal Christianity* for church members. Monday and Tuesday provided a total of 12 additional hours for pastors, focusing on their leadership roles. (These seminars are available on video tapes that include a student handbook. For more information contact the General Conference Stewardship Department.)

Preliminary indications are that there were more than 400 churches across Europe participating in this event. Pastors came together at central locations in different conferences to make it a real learning event in groups. Each downlink site had the materials in their language, and the PowerPoint presentation to use along with what came across in English visuals. There was a great deal of preparation done ahead of time, and we learned many things to help us do even better in the future. We want to thank the Euro-African Division for their vision and foresight in planning this event. Please pray that God will use this special event to help His church go forward in a growing discipleship.

Contact the General Conference Stewardship Department for more information on how you can have your own satellite training session.

New book of 100 stewardship stories

Sacrifice and Commitment is a book you must have in your library! Compiled by Jim Nix, Associate Director, Ellen G. White Estate, and published by the General Conference Stewardship Department, this book tells the stories of our pioneers. In its pages you will meet people who gave themselves, so totally and completely, to God's divine plans. Through this book you will see the connection between the Seventh-day Adventist Church today and its miraculous history.

This book is compiled with church pastors and administrators in mind. In it you will find the right story for every occasion—whether you are preparing a sermon, getting ready to meet with fellow administrators, or looking for something to strengthen your faith in God's church.

Order your copy today through the *Dynamic Steward* office for the special introductory price of US\$ 4.00. This price is valid only till December 1, 1999.



A matter of trust

Introduction

Today I want to share with you what I call the *Trust Test*. Let me share one man's experience as the introduction to my sermon:

At first I saw God as my observer, my judge, keeping track of the things that I did wrong so as to know whether I merited heaven or hell when I die. He was out there sort of like a president. I recognized His picture when I saw it, but I really didn't know Him.

But later on, when I met Christ, it seemed as though life was rather like a bike ride, but it was a tandem bike. And Christ was in the back helping me pedal. I don't know just when it was that He suggested that we change places, but life has never been the same since.

When I had control, I knew the way. It was rather boring, but it was predictable. It was the shortest distance between two points. But when He took the lead, He knew delightfully long cuts. Up mountains and through rocky places at break-neck speeds. It was all that I could do to hang on. And even though it looked like madness, He said *Pedal*. I worried and was anxious, and I asked *Where are You taking me?* He laughed and didn't answer. And that's when I learned that I was going to have to trust Him.

I forgot my boring life and entered into every adventure. And when I'd say *I'm scared*, He'd lean back and just touch my hand. He took me to people with gifts that I needed. Gifts of healing, acceptance, and joy. He gave me gifts to take on my journey and off we went again. And He would say *Give the gifts away. They're extra baggage, too much weight*. So I did, to people we met, and I found that in giving, I received. The journey continued and our burden was light. I did not trust Him at first to take control of my life. I thought He'd wreck it, but He knows bike secrets. He knows how to make those sharp corners and how to jump clear off high rocks and do things I could have never done if I were in control.

And I am learning to shut up and pedal in the strangest places. I'm beginning to enjoy the view and the cool breeze on my face with my delightful Companion, Jesus Christ. And when I'm not sure I can do it anymore, He smiles and says *Just pedal*.

At one point or another in life, we ask the question: Can I really trust God? Can we trust God with our lives? With our families? With our jobs? With our health? With our possessions? How we *answer this question, how we fare in this test determines the direction of our spiritual growth*.

How do we learn to trust God more completely?

- T Take inventory.
- R Recognize God as the source.
- U Understand God's principles.
- S Surrender everything to God.
- T Test God's promises.

Look deep into my heart, God, and find out everything that I am thinking.

Don't let me follow evil ways, but lead me in the way that time has proven true.

—Ps 139: 23, 24 CEV

Take inventory

Only God knows everything about us. The Psalmist said, *God, look deep into my heart and find out everything that I am thinking (Ps 139: 23, CEV)*. He is saying to God, *I don't know what's down there. I don't even know what I'm thinking. Look deep in my heart*. He's asking God to help him take inventory. Only God can lead me correctly. The Psalmist recognized his tendency to follow evil ways.

Taking inventory and trusting God begins with me. I have to take a personal inventory. Proverbs 13:1-10 tells us how to do this. *With all your heart you must trust the Lord, and not your own judgment. Always let him lead you, and he will clear the road for you to follow. Don't ever think that you are wise enough, but respect the Lord and stay away from evil. This will make you healthy, and you will feel strong. Honor the Lord by giving him your money and the first part of all your crops. Then you will have more grain and grapes than you will ever need*. Trust begins with personal inventory. I need to take responsibility and do my part. I do my part, and God does His part.

Recognize God as the source.

After taking inventory, recognize God as the source of life. Recognize that

He knows everything. There's nothing hidden from Him. A mother was telling her daughter a little bit about the facts of life. Dumbfounded and shocked at these new revelations, the little girl asked, *Mom, does God know these things?* God knows them all. He's the source.

The Bible refers to the power and super knowledge of God as the source. We cannot grow our hair without God being the source (*Matt 5:36*). We cannot extend our life without God being the source (*Matt 6:27*). We cannot be certain of tomorrow without God as the source (*James 4:14*). We cannot save ourselves from disaster without God being our source (*Acts 27:20-22*). We are humbled when we recognize where we are.

William Beavy, the naturalist and close friend of Teddy Roosevelt, spent many evenings with the President. After dinner, they would go outside and look at the stars in the heavens and Beavy would say, *That is a galaxy as large as the Milky Way. It consists of 100 billion suns. It is one of 100 billion galaxies.* Roosevelt would grin and respond, *Now I think we're small enough. Let's go to bed.* God's the source.

Understand God's principles

Let me first give you three reasons why Christians don't give more to God: 1. *They don't think they have enough to give* 2. *They don't know how to give*. 3. *They don't budget to give*. Now, stewardship principles make a difference. If people really understood the principles of stewardship, they would see that all these reasons for not giving aren't reasons at all, but mere excuses.

1. The *Who's in Charge* Principle. God's the Owner; I'm the Manager. Ask yourself today, *Who's going to run my life The earth and everything that is in it belongs to the Lord. The world and its people belong to him (Ps 24:1).*

2. The *Give and Grow* Principle. Practicing stewardship produces spiritual growth and increases our faith. We become spiritually sensitive. We become fruitful for God's kingdom. We receive a blessing from God. We are a blessing to others. We make a lasting contribution. You see, stewardship training isn't about raising money or gifts. It's about raising Christians and developing you the way that you need to be developed.

3. The *Do it Now* Principle. Stewardship deals with our present resources.

Procrastination is my greatest sin.
It brings me endless sorrow.
I'm going to stop doing it.

How long are you going to wait before you find out what your spiritual gift is? How long are you going to wait before you use it? How long are you going to bury the resources God has given you? There's a tendency for us to say, *Well, one of these days I'm going to find out what my spiritual gift is.* What are we doing right now? God is concerned about our present resources. Imagine appearing before God, who gave you those gifts. He looks at you, and wants to know what you did with your gifts? And you don't even know what they are!

And what are you doing with your present resources now? I know you're saying, *If I had just won that lottery last week, I'd given all that money to the church.* No you wouldn't. You don't tithe now. If you can't give Him 10% now, you're not going to give Him a 100% later.

A very wealthy man was on a prosperity gospel kick. And he went from town to town talking about how he once only had \$20 in his pocket and when the offering plate came by he put all \$20 in, and of how this made him a multimillionaire. People loved this story, and they would clap and cheer him on. Using his personal testimony, he encouraged people to give just as he had given.

When he was telling the same story in a meeting, he got the same response of clapping and cheering. And then a woman raised her hand.

He looked at her and said, *Ma'am, do you have a question?* She said, *Yes. Now let me make sure I understand. You only had \$20. You gave all \$20 to God and He made you rich and famous?*

Yeah, that's exactly the way it happened.

Just one question, she said, Would you do it all over again—now that you have millions and not just \$20?

*O holy trust!
O endless
sense of rest!
Like the
beloved John
To lay his
head upon
the Savior's
breast,
And thus to
journey on!
—Henry
Wadsworth
Longfellow*

Sermons

There are three kinds of givers: the flint, the sponge, the honeycomb.

To get anything out of a flint you must hammer it. And then you get only chips and sparks.

To get water out of a sponge you must squeeze it, and the more you use pressure, the more you will get.

But the honeycomb just overflows with its own sweetness.

Which kind of giver are you?

It is tiresome hearing spiritual cliches about how God *will* provide. Let me tell you something. God has already provided. The issue is not God's provision. The issue is for you and I to learn to manage the resources He has already given. We need to be good stewards of what we already have.

4. The *I'm in Debt* Principle. From the moment we are born into this world, we are in debt. Our indebtedness is two-fold: We are indebted to God for our health, life, everything. We are indebted to the previous generation. We must never forget those who have gone on before us, who are part of the blessings we have today. Everything we have is a gift from God or a gift from somebody else. And it's our job to take those gifts and reproduce and multiply and develop them to glorify God and to help our fellowmen.

5. The *Fountain of Youth* Principle. We live forever through our giving. Jesus said that what we keep we lose and what we lose we keep. You've all heard the expression, *You can't take it with you*. There's another I like even better—*You never see a hearse with a luggage rack*. Our gifts are worthwhile only if they are used here on earth. We give of ourselves not to make us look good, not only to help us grow in our life, but to reach our community. The vision is not for us. The vision is for God's kingdom. And it looks better every day!

6. The *Who's Number One?* Principle. Instead of giving Jesus our best, we sometimes tend to give Him our leftovers. *Honor the Lord with your possessions and the first fruit of all your increase (Prov 3:9). On the first day of the week, let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he or she may prosper (1 Cor 16:2)*. God tells us that we are to give Him the first, not the last of everything. Our human nature would rather give God what's left over. We often put our possessions and ourselves first. If there's anything left over, we say, *Well, sure, God. I can give you what I have*. Where is God in your life right now? Is He first, second, or 25th? The Lord said, *Where your treasure is, that's where your heart is*. He is saying, *I can tell you what you love the most by looking at your checkbook and calendar. I know what your priorities are in life*.

7. The *Cheerful Attitude* Principle. Stewardship begins with loving, not giving. We can give without loving, but we cannot love without giving. The basis of my stewardship and management of all the resources that God has given me has to be based on the fact that I love Him with all my heart, my soul, and my strength. Carl Meninger, the famous psychiatrist, said that generous people rarely suffer from mental illness. When we begin to live beyond ourselves and give of our time and talent and everything—when we begin to live beyond our world of self—it changes our mind-set. We become healthy people emotionally, psychologically, physically, and spiritually.

8. The *Big Shovel* Principle. You cannot out-give God because He's got a bigger shovel than you or I do. Jesus said *Give and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be poured into your lap. But by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return (Lk 6:38)*. A very generous giver was asked, *How is it that you have given so much and yet God has blessed you financially in every area?* He replied, *It's very simple. I shovel in and God shovels back. And God has a bigger shovel than me*.

9. The *River* Principle. Our life is to be like a river, not a reservoir. We should not hold back what God has given me; instead we should pass it on to others. We are to let God's power flow through us in these five areas: a. Through our life—what we are; b. Through our lips—what we say; c. Through our ministry—what we do; d. Through our money—what we give; e. Through our prayer—what we claim in Jesus' name.

10. The *Who Has Whom* Principle. Until God is in control of my life, I am out of control. Back to our acrostic of the word *trust*. S stands for *Surrender everything to God*.

Surrender everything to God

If only I had more, I would give more. How often have we all said that? Luke has something to say about such statements. *He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much (Lk 16:10, KJV)*. What did Luke mean? If you are not giving sacrificially with what you have now, you won't give sacrificially when you have



more. Why? It's not how much we have of the world that dictates our generosity towards God but how much God has of us.

Who am I going to trust? Am I going to live like the world does and trust in myself, become independent and do my own thing? Or am I going to truly trust, obey, and depend wholly on God? The issue is not your talent, your time, your abilities or your money. The issue is very simple. Who do I trust in?

Test God's Promises

Mother Teresa said *I know God will not give me anything I can't handle. I just wish He didn't trust me so much.* Do you know why God trusted her so much? Because Mother Teresa proved to be trustworthy. If you are doing without something in the area of your need, the Bible says that God will supply all our needs (*Isa 58:10*). If you're doing without, reevaluate your trust test and see what is the problem.

Every great character in the Bible had to go through the trust test. Here are four examples from the Old Testament.

1. Noah. When God told him to build an ark because it was going to rain, Noah had to trust implicitly for it had never rained before. Major trust, don't you think? Would you like to explain that to your neighbor? No wonder they ridiculed Noah. But Noah obeyed and trusted Him. *Noah did all that the Lord commanded him (Gen 7:6)*. Noah passed the trust test.

2. Abraham. God gave Abraham the greatest test. As Abraham and Isaac were going up Mount Moriah, Isaac asked, *Where's the sacrifice?* Abraham said, *God will provide.* Then we find Isaac on the altar and Abraham about to slay his son, and there is still trust—Isaac lays there trusting, Abraham raises his hand, trusting. Finally at the height of climatic tension, God says *Do not lay a hand on the boy. . . Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son (Gen 22:12)*. Abraham passed the trust test.

3. Joshua. You know the story of Moses crossing the Red Sea. But can you imagine the people hollering at Joshua as he's going down to the Jordan River prior to leading the people of Israel into the Promised Land? *Hey, Josh, you don't have your rod. Go get your rod. You know you go to the river, you put out your rod and the water parts. Get the rod.* But God didn't want Joshua to use a rod. God didn't want them to trust in methods. He wanted them to trust in God. And as soon as the water parted *it came about that all the kings of the Amorites that were beyond the Jordan and all the kings of the Canaanites heard how the Lord had dried up the waters of the Jordan before the sons of Israel until they had crossed and their hearts melted. There was no spirit in them any longer (Josh 5:1, KJV)* Joshua passed the trust test.

4. David. As soon as Saul found out that David was going to fight Goliath, he clothed David with his garments and put a bronze helmet on his head, and he clothed him with his armor. Think about this for a moment. Saul was about 6'4", weighing 225 pounds; David is about 5'6" and weighs 130. You get the picture? David is putting on Saul's armor. Wouldn't that be funny? *David girded his sword over his armor and tried to walk, for he had not tested them. So David said to Saul, 'I cannot go with these for I have not tested them,' and David took them off (1 Sam 17:39, NKJV)*. David passed the trust test.

Noah trusted in God, not the familiar. Abraham trusted in God, not in personal feelings. Joshua trusted in God, not methods. David trusted in God, not man's armor. They all had to take the Trust Test. You and I have to take the Trust Test too. Listen to the promises that God gives His children when we tithe:

He will provide for us. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse so that there will be food in my house ... 'Test me now on this,' says the Lord of Hosts. 'If I will not open for you the floodgates of heaven and pour out a blessing until it overflows' (Mal 3:10).

He will protect us. Then I will rebuke the devourer for you so that it may not destroy the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field cast its grapes,' says the Lord of Hosts (Mal 3:11).

On keeping a promise . . .

March 11, 1942, was a dark, desperate day at Corregidor. The Pacific theater of war was threatening and bleak. One island after another had been buffeted into submission. The enemy was now marching into the Philippines as confident and methodical as the star band in the Rose Bowl parade. Surrender was inevitable. The brilliant and bold soldier, Douglas MacArthur, had only three words for his comrades as he stepped into the escape boat destined for Australia: I shall return. Upon arriving nine days later in the port of Adelaide, the sixty-two-year-old military statesman closed his remarks with this sentence:

I came through and I shall return.

A little over 2 1/2 years later—October 20, 1944, to be exact—he stood once again on Philippine soil after landing safely at Leyte Island. This is what he said: This is the voice of freedom, General MacArthur speaking.

People of the Philippines:
I have returned!

MacArthur kept his word. His word was as good as his bond. Regardless of the odds against him, including the pressures and power of enemy strategy, he was bound and determined to make his promise good.

Robert G Herring, Pastor, Bethel Lutheran Church, Fort Smith, Arkansas. (This sermon was originally preached in two parts.)



How far you go in life depends on your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving, and tolerant of the weak and the strong. Because someday in life you will have been all of these.

—George Washington Carver

Scripture

Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you? (Matt 18:33).

Introduction

The hope of every parent is to rear children to be successful. Financial counselors tell us to begin saving even before our children are born. Money, however, is not a guarantee that they will get an education. The bill may be paid, but if our children don't want to study, it is to no avail. If our children lack aspiration, money is of no benefit. Therein lies the challenging question: How do we influence our children to aspire and dream, and fulfill their dreams. How do they become children who want to be successful and actually accomplish it?

Successful people

The Bible is full of examples of successful people. They were one of a kind. There was Joseph—Although he was sold as a slave, falsely accused, and thrown in jail, he became governor of Egypt! Look at David—He was young and inexperienced, but to everyone's surprise, God chose David as the future king of Israel. David had such confidence in himself that when Saul tried to discourage him from fighting Goliath, David insisted *I can do it, I will defeat Goliath*. What gave him such confidence? There are plenty of stories of people who started out with nothing, yet made it against all odds. Such was the case of Joseph and David. Money is not always the answer.

Wilma Rudolph is another example. She was the 20th of 22 children. She was born prematurely and her chances of survival were slim. When she was 4 years old, she contracted double pneumonia and scarlet fever, which left her with a paralyzed left leg. At age 9, she removed the metal leg brace she had been dependent on and began to walk without it. By 13 she had developed a rhythmic walk which doctors said was a miracle. That same year she decided to become a runner. She entered a race and came in last. For the next few years, in every race she entered, she came in last. Everyone told her to quit, but she kept on running. One day she actually won a race. And then another. From then on she won every race she entered. Eventually this little girl, who was told she would never walk again, went on to win three Olympic gold medals! *My mother taught me very early to believe I could achieve any accomplishment I wanted to. The first was to walk without braces*, Wilma Rudolph said.

How do I instill in my children the confidence of David, the perseverance of Joseph, the unrelenting spirit of Wilma Rudolph? How do I inspire my children to reach for the stars? There is a principle that is the firm foundation of all three lives. It is a principle that Jesus authored and practiced. Others have practiced it too, producing the noble success parents desire for their children.

What is success?

Many understand *success* as having a lot of money. Some measure success by the educational degrees. Others view success as a life of servitude—a life that brings happiness to others as well as one self. Basically, this person loves and is loved, is happy and makes others happy. This is Jesus' principle of success. When applied today—2000 years later—it still works. You do not have to be a business manager to benefit from this principle. Jesus' example is for us all.

A few years ago, NBC was not doing very well. General Electric bought the company and placed Bob Wright as its president. Not many people were happy with that appointment. General Electric is a company of engineers, and Bob Wright, an engineer himself, prompted people in the television industry to ask, *What does Bob Wright know about running a TV network?* Most people were convinced Wright was a big mistake. However, today NBC is the number one television network in the U.S.A. And Bob Wright is regarded as one of the most effective and successful managers in the business world. How did he do it? Wright may not know this, but he practiced the Jesus' principle of successful management.

Don Ohlmeyer, the programming director for NBC, was at home one

weekend, not expecting visitors. Early in the morning Bob Wright and three of Don's adult sons arrived at his house. The visitors delivered two strong messages. They told Ohlmeyer they cared deeply about him, and also told Ohlmeyer that he needed help right away to deal with his drinking problem. Now this was a highly unusual practice in an enterprise the size of NBC. In a big corporation where there is no time to worry about people's problems. A man whose personal problems are affecting his work performance is quickly fired and replaced. But Bob Wright wanted Ohlmeyer to know that he was of great value to them.

Several hours later, Ohlmeyer checked into the Betty Ford Clinic for a 28-day stay. This was not the first time Bob Wright practiced Jesus' principle of success. Quoted in a Fortune magazine article, GE employees say that *Bob Wright and his wife, Suzanne, treat top NBC performers like family, entertaining them at their home, sending holiday gifts to their kids, and coming to their aid in crises. When Brandon Tartikoff, an employee at GE, and eight-year-old daughter, Calla, were critically injured in an auto accident in Reno, the Wrights interrupted their vacation to fly to the scene. More importantly, Wright dispatched GE planes to bring in top specialists from other parts of the United States to perform surgery on the young girl.*

People first

Fortune magazine asked Bob Wright to explain his management philosophy. He explained *Our job at General Electric is to deal with resources, human and financial. The idea of getting great talent, giving them all the support in the world, and letting them run is the whole management philosophy of General Electric. Here is the principle: Put people first.* This is the principle that Jesus taught with His example. When he founded His church, he did not look for a property that he might build his headquarters on and then launch his great crusade for the salvation of the world. He started with people. He gave them all the support they needed, and then He let them run. This is how a humble carpenter from Galilee began the Christian Church—He put people first!

When Microsoft needs new workers, it goes to universities, recruiting the most talented people they can find. They then train them and let them run the show. These great companies realize that the greatest asset they have is people. Not machinery, not buildings, and not cash flow. It is people. There was a time when companies felt good when they had great material assets. The more properties, the more computers, the more money, the better they were doing. Today many understand that all of that erodes, it devalues. But the value of people is a treasure that multiplies with time.

How can we apply the people principle outside the business world? How can we apply it in our home, in our church? How much of our time and planning do we devote to our children, our future? On our agendas are issues—Should we sell or should we buy? Should we have an evangelistic meeting or a cooking school? Should we have one service or two? So little time is spent discussing people. And then we wonder why people leave, discouraged, bitter and broken!

We talk evangelism and we plan evangelize. We create pamphlets, publish books, run campaigns, and produce programs. Although all this gets the message across, it is the *people* principle that gets the people to stay with the church. A church that cares, that supports, that is always there for you—is one that's home, that's family. The greatest asset of a church is its people! When members leave the church, do we ask ourselves why they are leaving? Do we ask ourselves if there was something we could have done for them?

We must put people first. When we value people, when we practice the *people principle*, we inspire them. Joseph had a special relationship with his father who nurtured him. David's father believed in him (He trusted him with his sheep). Believe in your children and in all of their dreams, care for them, tell them how much you love them, and show your love by spending time with them. Put them first and they will turn into dreamers and achievers who will change the world for the better. Believe in your church members, care for them, show them your love, and they, too, will be inspired to make a difference and revolutionize the world.

Let us not underestimate how hard it is to be compassionate. Compassion is hard because it requires the inner disposition to go with others to the place where they are weak, vulnerable, lonely, and broken. But this is not our spontaneous response to suffering. What we desire most is to do away with suffering by fleeing from it or finding a quick cure for it.
—Henri J M Nouwen

Introduction

There was a new pastor in a particular church. Things went along very smoothly for several months. Everyone liked the pastor's personality. They especially liked his sermons, until one week the topic was *money*. *Up to now you've done well*, one of his deacons told him after the service. *But today you began to meddle*.

Today I am going to meddle. I'm going to talk about money. How can I do otherwise when my duty is to preach the Word of God, and God's Word clearly confronts us with this issue. Amos warns the rich that they will be the first to go into exile for their sins (*Amos 6:1-7*). Paul tells Timothy to command the rich not to be haughty, or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches. Jesus describes in a parable the contrast between a self-centered rich man and the poor man Lazarus (*Luke 16:19-31*).

Where's your treasure?

*For each of us
the time is
surely coming
when we shall
have nothing
but God.
Health and wealth
and hiding places
will all be
swept away,
and we shall have
only God.
To the man of
pseudo faith
that is a terrifying
thought,
but to real faith
it is one of the
most comforting
thoughts
the heart
can entertain.*

—A W Tozer

A blessing and a curse

The scriptures often speak of money and material wealth. In fact two-thirds of Jesus' parables deal with monetary issues. Why? Because money always has been, and always will be, one of the great driving forces in society.

We live in a material environment. Through money we provide shelter, food, clothing, transportation. Money brings us comfort and pleasure. A sufficient amount of money removes anxiety. Money is important. It needs to be spoken of in the Church because a correct attitude towards money is essential to an authentic Christian life. Money as such is neither good nor bad. It can be a great blessing or a great curse. Everything depends on the proper attitude towards money and the proper use of money.

Money becomes a curse when we lose our perspective. The laws of perspective are such that a minute thing near at hand can shut out a massive thing in the distance. A small hill or even a tree directly in front of us can obscure Pike's Peak. Similarly, a little bit of money can block out God Himself. *You cannot be a slave of two masters*, Jesus said *You cannot serve God and money* (*Matt 6:24*).

A man, holding a dollar bill in his hand, read off the statement, *In God we trust*. He then commented, *Perhaps it should say, 'In this god we trust.'* It's not money as such, but the misuse of money that can throw us all out of whack.

A man was visiting an American land baron. After dinner the host took his guest out to the front porch. Waving his arms towards the horizon the land baron said, *Everything you see belongs to me. Those oil wells way out there—they're mine. That golden grain on the hills—that's mine. Those cattle in the valley—mine, all mine.*

Unimpressed, the visitor waved his arms towards the heavens and said, *And what do you own up there?*

Four basic truths

The rich man in Jesus' parable allowed his riches to blind him to four basic truths.

1. Everything belongs to God our Creator; we are privileged to be the managers of God's property.
2. The human race is created by God to be a loving, caring family; men like Lazarus are our brothers.
3. God blesses some of us with more than others to provide us with an opportunity to share generously with those less fortunate. Jesus said, *Unto whomsoever much is given, much also shall be required* (*Luke 12:48*).
4. Our real country is heaven; we are merely sojourners here on earth, passing through, and should keep our eyes on heavenly things. Jesus said, *Where your treasure is there will your heart be also. So do not store up treasure on earth where rust and moth consume, but store up treasure in heaven* (*Matt 6:20, 21*).

Eleven millionaires went to a watery grave on the ill-fated Titanic in April 1912 with a combined wealth of over \$200,000,000. Suppose, like the rich man in the parable, they have a message for us. Would they not try to warn us of the dangers of amassing wealth and exhort us to listen to Moses and prophets like Amos? In particular, would they not tell us to heed the words of the One risen from the dead?

Our father, Abraham, was told by God that he was to be blessed so that he



could be a blessing for others. Therein is the proper understanding of all God's blessings. Therein is the proper understanding of the blessing of riches.

Conclusion

Listen to what Paul says: *As for those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty, or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but rather on God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that really is life (1 Tim 6:17, NRSV).*

There's the answer for any of us who have been given material blessings beyond what we really need. God has blessed us to be a blessing to others. To share with the Lazuruses of the world. To be magnanimous in supporting God's work through His Church. To give sacrificially, thus storing up for ourselves treasure in heaven.

We've all heard the expression *You can't take it with you*. Perhaps it should be *You will take with you only that which you have generously given away*.

Prayer of acknowledgment and consecration

Father, we confess that we have sometimes lost the proper perspective towards our material blessings. Instill in us an understanding that everything belongs to you and that we are privileged to be Your managers. Make us more aware of the brotherhood of all mankind and our need to share with those less fortunate. Help us to understand that every gift You give us involves the task of giving to others. Feed us at this service with Jesus, the Bread of Life, so that our minds may be transformed into His mind. In Him and His strength we promise to share more generously than we have in the past, thereby storing up for ourselves abundant treasure in heaven. Amen.

I gave them to Him,

All the things I'd valued so

Until I stood there empty-handed.

Every glittering toy did go.

And I walked earth's lonely highways

In my rags and poverty;

Till I heard His voice entreating,

Lift your empty hands to Me.

Empty hands I lifted to Him,

And He filled them with a store

Of His own transcendent riches

Till my hands could hold no more.

And at last I comprehended,

With my mind so slow and dull,

That God could not pour His riches

Into hands already full.

—James S Hewett, *Illustrations Unlimited*

Giving with glad and generous hearts has a way of routing out the tough old miser within us. Even the poor need to know that they can give. Just the very act of letting go of money, or some other treasure, does something within us. It destroys the demon greed.

— Richard J Foster

Book Reviews



Cries of the Heart

by Ravi Zacharias

Word Publishing

Nashville, Tennessee, 1998

US\$ 19.99

Ravi Zacharias writes with philosophic passion. He owes his philosophy to his roots and his passion to his confrontation with Christ. Born and brought up in India, he is no stranger to the riddles of life or to the strange route philosophy takes in interpreting those riddles. But when he chose to study theology in Canada and prepare for the ministry, he had a strange meeting with his Lord. And ever since he has been speaking and writing on what life is all about—outside of Christ and within Christ.

The contrast comes through clear in this work. He lets history, his own personal experience, and his public ministry inform him of the various cries of the human heart: the cry to know God, to feel the pangs of faith, to understand suffering, to interpret guilt, to excel in freedom, to suffer in silence. Each of these cries is illuminated by stories—real stories involving real people, such as Lewis, Eichmann, Freud, Muggeridge, Wesley, Luther and many more. No pastor can miss the thrill these stories can bring to his or her congregation.

But the author does not stop just with an exposition of the cry. He offers a solution, not from his philosophic cup or theological jar, but from God's Word. The message is clear: the cry is for the moment, the joy is forever. In Jesus. So the last chapter of the book turns to God's cry for His people. From the first chapter's quest, *Where is God?* to the last chapter's answer *God is always there for His people*, the book completes the circle.

In so defining life, with all its majesty and mystery, with its pain and joy, Zacharias challenges the Christian to seek, find, and hold on to God—in whom alone we can live, move and have our being. Contentment, courage, and confidence ring through the book, and each of the seven chapters is a mighty sermon that shouts hallelujah even as it celebrates the unlovable and the mysterious in life.

John M Fowler, Associate Director, General Conference Education Department



Life Essentials: A Guide for Spiritual Growth

Moody Press

Chicago, Illinois, 1999

US\$ 29.99

It is commonly said that how we spend our days is how we spend our lives. If you are like most people, the minute you wake up, your thoughts are flooded with all the things you need to do that day. As humans, our impulse is to get started on those things and to accomplish all we can. But as Christians, we are primarily called into relationship with Jesus Christ. And that relationship requires that we spend time with God worshiping Him, studying His Word, and asking Him to be at the center of all we do. This is what is essential. So it's time to spend our time where it counts the most.

If you are longing to grow closer to God, but struggle with where to begin, if there are too many things that call for your attention all the time, then *Life Essentials* is for you. Designed to help you develop and mature in your walk with Christ, it focuses on the three areas of growth:

- Growing Spiritually
- Growing Personally
- Growing in Ministry

Filled with tips on studying the Bible, it includes a prayer journal to guide you in praying for your family members; sermon/Bible study notes; articles on sharing your faith; extensive recommended reading lists of top Christian literature; counsel on finances from God's perspective; and much more. *Life Essentials* will walk you step by step in building a more intimate relationship with our God.

Whether you're snuggling up with a cup of cocoa at home, out on the road, or catching just a few minutes with God in the midst of your busy schedule, this is the ideal devotional companion. It is the perfect place for you to spend time developing the kind of relationship with God that He so desires to have with you—so that everything else you do will overflow out of that, with Him at the center.

Book Reviews

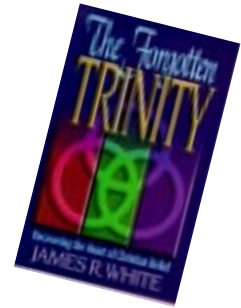
The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of the law (*Deut 29:29*).

The Trinity is one of the fundamental beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We believe that there is one God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, a unity of three co-eternal Persons. This is a teaching most challenged in the Christian Faith.

In studying it, we need to avoid two extremes: The First one is to go beyond the boundaries of the Bible. Referring to the second extreme, James R White, author of *The Forgotten Trinity* makes the following observation: *It is the topic (the Trinity) we won't talk about: no one dares question the Trinity for fear of being branded a 'heretic' yet we have all sorts of questions about it we aren't sure we can ask. Many believers have asked questions of those they thought more mature in the faith and have often been confused by the contradictory answers they received. Deciding it is best to remain confused rather than have one's orthodoxy questioned, many simply leave the topic for that mythical future day 'When I have more time.' And in the process, we have lost out on a tremendous blessing (p 14).*

The Forgotten Trinity is indeed a remarkable book. White has the art of being concise, yet clear and understandable. Throughout the 14 chapters, he successfully endeavors to convey the identity, function and importance of the Trinity. However, it was the practical aspect of this book that appealed to me the most. The book boils down to the focus of the reader and how the Trinity makes a difference in one's every day life: It begins with the Trinity and worship; then moves to the Trinity and the Gospel; and finally comes down to the Trinity and you. The end result is that the reader has more than an understanding of the Trinity. The reader now has a meaningful relationship with the Godhead.

Paul Ratsara, Director, Africa-Indian Ocean Division Stewardship Department



The Forgotten Trinity

by James White

**Bethany House Publishers
Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1998**

US\$ 10.99

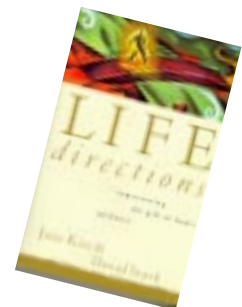
Without a clear understanding of what it means to find God's will, the search for personal guidance frequently results in analysis paralysis. Sometimes our desire for absolute certainty blocks us from stepping out in faith so that God can guide us. *LifeDirections* (Combining two words, the authors coin a new word to describe the purpose of this book.) offers a fresh look at finding God's will.

Designed for individual or group study, this book uses biblical and real-life examples to explain the four guidance systems that God uses to guide us. Most often, major misdirection or a seeming lack of direction follows reliance on only one or two of these systems instead of integrating information from all four.

LifeDirections first gives practical steps for finding God's will through Scripture, both God-given insights and life-giving principles. The second system, Special Design, considers how the talents, gifts, personality, values, and passions we were given point to what God would have us do and to the methods God might use to make leadings clear. Third, principles are given for grasping how and why the Holy Spirit might lead us directly. Finally, *LifeDirections* explores how Circumstances can guide us: what the Bible really has to say about doors that open and close in our lives.

Practical suggestions are provided for problems that might block the clear knowledge of God's will. In today's world of rapid change and abundant opportunity, uncertainty over direction in life is a reality for many people. *LifeDirections* helps believers find guidance and purpose for all areas of their lives.

More importantly, this book is more than a spiritual compass to help the reader see God's direction. This book is full of hope for those who feel lost even when fitted with the best spiritual armor. *LifeDirections* teaches you how to believe in successfully completing life's journey in spite of the potholes along the way.



LifeDirections

by Jane Kise and David Stark

**Bethany House Publishers
Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1999**

US\$ 10.99

Resources

Here are some web sites to help you in preparing sermons, talks, and programs for children. These sites have not been reviewed by *Dynamic Steward*; therefore, surf and use at your discretion. Please submit your favorite web sites to be included in future issues of *Dynamic Steward*.

Ellen G White Writings—Browse and search through books and periodicals; cut and paste; have questions answered; read your favorite book.

EGWestate.andrews.edu

Bible Concordance—Look up and compare different versions of the Bible; read it in one of 10 languages.

Gospelcom.net/bible

Bible Studies—download free Bible studies categorized by books of the Bible.

Biblegems.com

Sermon Illustrations—Find the right illustration; donate your illustration; register to get weekly illustrations via email.

Sermonillustrations.com

Preaching OnLine—Resource center for pastors; access it using a password; subscription is \$19.95 for six months and \$29.95 for one year.

Preaching.com

Quotes, Jokes, and Stats—Monthly email, each containing 20 illustrations, 15 quotes, 10 jokes and many statistics; subscription is \$21.99 per year; for an additional \$13.00 get 2 full sermon manuscripts every month.

Help4Sunday.com

Editorial

In the days of Jesus, in the dry and parched lands of the east there was no city water—no reservoirs, no water tanks. When the community wells ran dry, the poor hoped that some magnanimous rich man would come into town with his personal valet. Here's how it usually happened: A rich man, purely for the purpose of doing a good act and bringing a blessing upon his family, would walk into the market place of a town that was running low on water. Beside him would be his valet, carrying an extra large leather water pouch. Then the rich man would say in his deepest, most theatrical voice, *Give the poor and the thirsty a drink of my water!* And the valet would call out, *Come drink the offering of my Master. Come quench your thirst.* Soon the poor would line the dusty street, waiting for their turn to drink the offering. As each man stepped up to take a drink he would pay homage to the rich man who stood continually bellowing, *Bless me, who gave you this drink.* It was this kind of giving that Jesus deplored and condemned (*Matt 6:2-4*).

Now we don't bellow out the amount in our tithe and offering envelope as we drop it into the offering plate. Yet our actions associated with giving often scream of prestige, recognition, and self-glory. What is the spirit of our giving? What should our giving reflect? Maxson's *Fresh Look at Giving* helps us focus on the principles of the best kind of giving.

The rich man gave to guarantee a blessing. He gave for personal security. What should motivate our giving? The sermons in this issue suggest that implicit trust in God, putting others before ourselves, and letting Jesus be in control are elements that ought to motivate giving.

We need to return to the Eden model of stewardship (*see Mills' lead article*). We must give, not in competition with one another, but in a spirit of worship. We must give, not to be benefactors, but to be partners with God. We must give, not to be praised, but to be humbled in the presence of an awesome God.

Fylvia Fowler Kline, Assistant Director, General Conference Stewardship Department



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