

**TITHE AND OFFERING
READINGS**



2002

ATTENTION!

Dated material to be adapted,
translated and distributed to
Seventh-day Adventist churches
before December 2001.

THE ATTITUDE OF GIVING

By Fylvia Fowler Kline

Edited and prepared by the Stewardship Department, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904, USA. ©2001

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Unless otherwise specified, the New International Version is used for all scriptural references.

We welcome your comments and suggestions for future authors and themes for the **Tithe and Offering Readings.**

(For your convenience, pages i-vi are repeated at the end of the readings.)

A note from the author:

Take it from me, the topic of *stewardship* is addictive. The more you study about and grow into a dynamic relationship with the Lord, the more you want to study and grow.

For the past several years I was paid to read about stewardship, write about stewardship, teach about stewardship—that was my job. Now it isn't my job, yet every minute I find myself fascinated by all the connections in my every day life that intertwine with stewardship. A true steward of Christ is energized by the permanent presence of the Holy Spirit, reflects the love of the Savior and walks in the shadow of the Cross.

Imagine this: You are sitting in your usual place in church. It is time for the deacons to collect the offering and tithe. As you reach into your pocket, the curtains of heaven are parted by angels, and Christ and all the heavenly beings look down to see the view. Do you think they're counting to see if you give an adequate and acceptable amount? No. They are looking down—into your heart. And in your heart, they see a throne where only Jesus reigns. And there's great rejoicing and much applause!

Yes, offerings and tithes are a big part of stewardship, but only when the attitude of the giver reflects a life where God is in total control of everything. The readings for this year are a collection of stories, illustrations and quotations that represent true stewardship attitude.

My prayer is that this collection will bring about a change of attitude in the hearts of those who hear the voice of the Holy Spirit.

--Fylvia Fowler Kline

SABBATHS WITHOUT DESIGNATED OFFERINGS

There are *six Sabbaths* in 2002 that do not have designated offerings. Each Division Committee is to designate these offerings for use in their Division, Conference or Union. The Sabbaths are: January 12, February 9, June 8, August 10, October 12 and December 14.

The titles of the readings of these non-designated offerings are noted as **“Scheduled Offering: Division.”**

THIRTEENTH SABBATH OFFERINGS FOR 2002

North American Division March 30
Northern Asia Pacific Division June 29
Southern Asia Pacific Division September 28
Africa Indian Ocean Division December 28

Special Offerings

RECOMMENDED, To adopt the Calendar of Special Offerings—World 2002,
as follows:

JANUARY

5 Outreach/Church Budget
12 Division
19 Church Budget
26 Conference/Union

FEBRUARY

2 Outreach/Church Budget
9 Division
16 Church Budget
23 Conference/Union

MARCH

2 Outreach/Church Budget
9* + Adventist World Radio* +
16 Church Budget
23 Conference/Union
30 Church Budget

APRIL

6 Outreach/Church Budget
13+ World Mission Budget+
(Church properties in SUD)
20 Conference Budget
27 Conference/Union

MAY

4 Outreach/Church Budget
11* + Disaster and Famine Relief* +
18 Church Budget
25 Conference/Union

JUNE

1 Outreach/Church Budget
8 Division
15 Church Budget
22 Conference/Union
29 Church Budget

JULY

6 Outreach/Church Budget
13+ World Mission+
20 Church Budget
27 Conference/Union

AUGUST

3 Outreach/Church Budget
10 Division
17 Church Budget
24 Conference/Union
31 Church Budget

SEPTEMBER

7 Outreach/Church Budget
14+ World Mission Budget+
(Go One Million)
21 Church Budget
28 Conference/Union

OCTOBER

5 Outreach/Church Budget
12 Division
19 Church Budget
26 Conference/Union

NOVEMBER

2 Outreach/Church Budget
9* + Annual Sacrifice (Global Mission)* +
16 Church Budget
23 Conference/Union
30 Church Budget

DECEMBER

7 Outreach/Church Budget
14 Division
21 Church Budget
28 Conference/Union

*Reading provided by corresponding entity
+Worldwide Offering

SCHEDULED SPECIAL OFFERINGS

SABBATH	TITLE	DATE
10 th	Adventist World Radio	March 9
15 th	World Mission Budget (Properties in SUD)	April 13
19 th	Disaster and Famine Relief	May 11
26 th	World Mission	July 13
37 th	World Mission (Go One Million)	September 14
45 th	Annual Sacrifice (Global Mission)	November 9

Sabbath 1
January 5, 2002
Offering: Outreach/Church Budget

In order to serve the Lord we must have the patience to follow him wherever he may lead. Driving a car is a difficult task but being a passenger is even more difficult. Allowing someone else to have control over the direction you are going is sometimes unbearable. When you are a passenger, do you sometimes find yourself reaching for the steering wheel or stepping on an invisible brake? Even though the urge is strong, you don't take hold of the steering wheel because you know that the consequences can be dangerous!

Following Jesus, serving God, is much like being the passenger in a car. Though difficult to do, you have to let the driver have control over where you are going. Control is something we humans have a hard time letting go of. More so when it comes to our money. We want to know all the details of where our money is going, how it is going to be used and the rest of the details. As the deacons collect your offerings and God's tithes today, give yourself the challenge to let God be in control over all that you give—After all, it's His to begin with, anyway!

Sabbath 2
January 12, 2002
Offering: Division

There was a group of botanists in search of a rare plant on the dangerous, steep Himalayas. When they finally found it growing on the side of a steep cliff, they offered a little boy a bribe to be lowered down by a rope and get the plant. Asking the botanists to wait a while, the boy left and returned with his father. He said he'd be willing to fetch the plant only if his father would hold the rope. So it ought to be with our Christian life. As long as God holds our lifeline, we ought to be able to faithfully follow His will, in total confidence that He will not let us go.

When we give our offerings and tithes to the church do we do it in self-confidence or God confidence? Is our giving based on how confident we are in our budgeting? Or is it based on how confident we are in God's providence? May we give today in the knowledge that God holds our lifeline. The deacons will now wait upon us.

Sabbath 3
January 19, 2002
Offering: Church Budget

“Good stewardship decisions are made with God’s Word in view. The psalmist advises, ‘The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple’ (Ps. 19:7). God will never lead you, nor will He lead your church, contrary to His revealed Word. . . .

“In his last years of service in Africa, when Livingstone was running out of time and his strength was low, he revealed the true motivation for his undaunted, selfless service in his tribute to his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, He wrote: “He is the greatest master I have ever known. If there is any one greater, I do not know him. Jesus Christ is the only master worth serving. He is the only ideal that never loses its inspiration. He is the only friend whose friendship meets every demand. He is the only ‘Savior who saves us to the uttermost. We go forth in His name, in His power and in His Spirit to serve Him.’” (Toler and Towns, *Developing a Giving Church*, Beacon Hill Press, 11999, p. 35.)

When you truly realize that there is only one true master worth serving, you come to the point when you can say with Paul, “Not I, but Christ. . .” Only then can your stewardship reflect the Master and not you. Whom does your offering reflect? The deacons will now wait upon us for God’s tithe and our offerings.

Sabbath 4
January 26, 2002
Offering: Conference/Union

World War II had ravaged the cities of Europe. One of the saddest sights was the orphans who roamed the streets. One chilly morning, an American soldier noticed a little boy with his nose pressed against the glass window of a bakery. Inside the baker was kneading fresh dough for the next batch of doughnuts. The little boy salivated, watching the whole process with keen interest. As the sweet smells wafted out of the bakery, the boy let out a hungry groan. The soldier's heart went out to the nameless orphan. "Would you like some of those?" he asked the boy. "Yes sir, I would," replied the startled boy. The soldier went into the bakery and returned with a bag of warm doughnuts. Taking the bag in his hands, the boy looked up at the soldier in awe and amazement, and softly asked, "Mister, are you God?"

We are never more like God than when we give. "God so loved the world that He gave. . . When we give, we reflect the image of God. As the deacons wait upon us for our tithes and offerings, ask yourself, "How is my giving reflecting the image of God?"

Sabbath 5
February 2, 2002
Offering: Outreach/Church Budget

“John Wesley said, ‘If people were more alive to God, they would be more liberal.’ Giving liberally is a direct consequence of commitment to Christ. Christian stewardship is a spiritual matter. The writer of First John declares, ‘We love because [Christ] first loved us’ (4:19). We know how to express Christian love because we have first experienced the sacrificial giving love of Jesus Christ. In the same way, we give because Christ first gave to us. As love begets love, so giving begets giving. The offering is one more way to express our appreciation to God for the greatest gift of all—the gift of our redemption.” (Eugene Grimm, *Generous People*, Abingdon Press, 1992, p 78.)

May our giving today reflect our appreciation for redemption. The deacons will now wait upon us.

Sabbath 6
February 9, 2002
Offering: Division

If you fill a clay pot with water and put it on your head, the water becomes a heavy load to carry. But when you swim underwater, you cannot feel the burden of the many gallons of water on top of your head. Why the difference? It's the environment that makes the difference. When you are in an environment of air, water is hard to carry; but when in an environment of water, it is easier.

The same is true of our giving. When we are in an environment of true Christian discipleship, giving is easy and comes naturally. But outside the environment of discipleship, giving is burdensome and unnatural. As you place your offerings and tithes today, check your environment of giving. Are you giving in an environment of discipleship? Is your giving a natural part of you? The deacons will now wait upon us.

Sabbath 7
February 16, 2002
Offering: Church Budget

A group of nursing students sat in a tense-filled room, waiting to take their final examination. The last question was “What is the name of the woman who cleans the school?” Every single student in that room had seen the cleaning woman at least once every day. They could all describe her—she was tall, dark-haired, a little heavy and in her mid 50’s. But her name? In all the years, they were there, they had never bothered to stop to find out her name, to say a few words, to get to know her better.

One student asked the professor, “Does the final question count toward our final grade? Does it have any points to it?” The professor replied, “Absolutely! In your careers, you will meet many people. Each person you meet is significantly important. Each deserves your attention and care, even if all you do is smile and say hello.” At the end of the exam, on their way out, every student learned that the cleaning woman was Dorothy. And they have remembered Dorothy every time they meet a stranger.

When we give without really knowing the Lord as our personal friend, our giving is sterile and meaningless. It is as though we don’t even know His name. As the deacons wait upon us, let us give in the context of our personal relationship with Him.

Sabbath 8
February 23, 2002
Offering: Conference/Union

“Stewardship of possessions is the effect of God's saving grace upon one's self and his property. When God gets a man with a car, He gets a car to be used in His service. Some seem to think of stewardship as a whip or as legal action to drive people to give to the expenses of the church. No doubt too often the attempt has been made to wring generous offerings from selfish souls. Christian stewardship most certainly is not church legislation or a scheme to deprive men of their cash. It is the natural consequence of an experience with God -- the natural reaction of the human heart that has been touched by the divine spirit.” (Milo Kauffman, *The Challenge of Christian Stewardship*, Herald Press, 1955, pp. 3-5.)

As you bring your offerings and tithe to the Lord today, remember that He stands to receive it—with pierced hands. Close your eyes and see those hands accepting your offering. Is your offering an honest reflection of your response to those hands? Ask yourself this as the deacons now wait upon us.

Sabbath 9

March 2, 2002

Offering: Outreach/Church Budget

There's a story about a rice farmer who saved his entire village. From his hilltop farm he felt the quake and saw the ocean swiftly crouch back from the shoreline, ready to leap into a tidal wave. Down below he saw his neighbors working the fields that would soon be flooded. What could he do? There was not much time. Taking a torch, he set his rice barn, his bountiful harvest, on fire. Seeing the smoke on top of the hill, the neighbors below ran up to help him. Then from their safety perch, they saw the tidal wave's sweeping force flood the fields they had just left. Instantly they knew not only who had saved them, but also what their salvation had cost their benefactor. The village later erected a memorial to the memory of the farmer on the hilltop. It said, "He gave us all he had, and he gave it gladly."

Should heaven decide to build a monument of your giving today, what would it say? Heaven rejoices more in the attitude of our giving than in the quantity. As the deacons wait upon us today, may each of us prayerfully check the attitude of our giving.

Sabbath 10
March 9, 2002
Offering: Adventist World Radio

“Hear my cry, O God; listen to my prayer. From the ends of the earth I call to you, I call as my heart grows faint; lead me to the rock that is higher than I” (Psalm 61:1, 2).

Did you know that there are over 1.6 billion people on this planet who have never heard the story of Jesus? Are you o.k. with that fact? Will the Gospel really ever go to the ends of the earth?

Adventist World Radio, known around the world as the Voice of Hope, is committed to making sure the Gospel goes to the ends of the earth. Through short wave, AM, FM, satellite, and even the Internet, AWR is leading people from the ends of the earth to the “Rock that is higher,” Jesus Christ.

Today is our chance to partner ourselves and this church with Adventist World Radio so that everyone who cries out, even from the most remote corner of the globe, can learn about Jesus. Our generous gifts today will, through the ministry of AWR, bring hope to the ends of the earth.

Sabbath 11
March 16, 2002
Offering: Church Budget

“Following a seminar presentation led by a prominent psychiatrist, a woman in the back of the room asked a question: ‘Doctor, what should I do when I feel a nervous breakdown coming on?’”

The doctor rubbed his chin and thought for a moment. Then he replied, ‘When you feel a nervous breakdown coming on, get out of bed, get dressed, leave your house, get into your car, go across town, and do something for somebody.’ . . . If we turn our attention toward others, we will see our own difficulties melt like ice cream on a hot, sunny day.” (Eugene Grimm, *Generous People*, Abingdon Press, 1992, p. 15)

It is easier to wallow in our own misery than it is to look outside of our world at the plight of others. No matter how bad things are in our life, there’s a place on this earth that is worse. Think about that today. Somewhere out there, is someone who has greater needs than you and I do. The deacons will now wait upon us.

Sabbath 12
March 23, 2002
Offering: Conference/Union

A widow who had successfully raised a very large family was being interviewed by a reporter. In addition to six children of her own, she had adopted 12 other youngsters, and through it all she had maintained stability and an air of confidence. When asked the secret of her outstanding accomplishment, her answer was quite surprising. She said, "I managed so well because I'm in a partnership! Many years ago I said, 'Lord, I'll do the work and You do the worrying.' And I haven't had an anxious care since."

When we share our load with God, we need not be disturbed by the demands of life. As the offering plate comes to you today, place in it more than your offering and the Lord's tithe. In the plate, place your every burden, your every care. And let the Lord do the worrying while you do your best.

Sabbath 13
March 30, 2002
Offering: Church Budget

The first attempt to dig the Panama Canal across the Isthmus of Panama was done by a French company. Men and machinery tackled the mountains and jungles. The project was abandoned, however, not because of the mountains but because of the mosquitoes. Yellow fever from mosquitoes killed thousands. American doctors found ways of protecting people against the mosquitoes. When the mosquitoes were taken care of the mountains soon succumbed. There is a great difference between the size of mountains and mosquitoes, yet the small mosquitoes did more damage. More men perished from the bite of the mosquitoes than from danger in the mountains.

You cannot succeed in the big opportunities of life when you have not been faithful in small obligations. "He who is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much, and he who is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much." May our offerings and tithes today be expressions of our faithfulness. The deacons will now wait upon us.

Sabbath 14**April 6, 2002****Offering: Outreach/Church Budget**

There was a man who was lost in a vast arid desert. He had not found any water for more than a day. He had to find some water soon or he would die. Just as he reached the end of desperation, he came to a rusty old hand pump. With the little energy he had left he began to pump and pump and pump. But it didn't work. Then he noticed a jar sitting to the side. The jar was full of water! On it was a written note that simply said, "If you use this water to prime the pump, then you will have plenty for yourself and enough to fill the jar for the next one thirsty soul who passes by."

Should he take a chance, prime the pump and lose the only water he had? Or should he drink the water in the jar without concern for the next thirsty soul? What he does will determine whether or not he is a true steward. A true steward is also a disciple, one who lives in the context of others. In what context do you give today? The deacons will now wait upon us.

Sabbath 15
April 13, 2002
Offering: World Mission Budget (SUD)

During the last five years we have seen dramatic growth in India. In the very spiritual culture of India, a place of worship is the center of life for people. Without this they feel like spiritual orphans.

There is no one thing we can do that is more important in establishing the rapidly growing work of God in India than building churches, and before that we must purchase properties. This gives stability, hope and a sense of belonging to individual congregations.

The property often costs more than the church. With an average monthly income of less than a dollar a day, it is impossible for our members to do this on their own. More than 1,500 congregations are without a property or a church building.

Today's offering will help to meet this critical need for church properties in India.

Sabbath 16
April 20, 2002
Offering: Conference Budget

A man was taking his usual morning walk through his neighborhood when a garbage truck pulled up next to him. At first he thought the driver must be lost. But then the driver stuck his arm out the window and showed the man a picture of a cute little boy. "This is my grandson, Jeremiah," he said. "He's on a life-support system in serious condition." Assuming this was another scam for money, the man reached into his pocket to get whatever little money it would take to make the driver and the garbage truck go away. The driver quickly stopped him. He said, "I don't want money, mister. I'm just asking everyone I see to pray for my grandson. Would you pray for him?"

How often we fall into the trap of thinking that money can solve everything! All the money we bring to church to put in the offering plate cannot bring about change. It takes more than money. It takes people united in Christ. It takes you and me. Won't you commit your talents to God as you give to Him in worship? The deacons will now wait upon us.

Sabbath 17
April 27, 2002
Offering: Conference/Union

A woman once said to a friend, "Our church costs too much. They are always asking for money." "Sometime ago a little boy was born in our home," replied her friend. "He cost me a lot of money from the very beginning: he had a big appetite, he needed clothes, medicine, toys, and even a puppy. Then he went to school, and that cost a lot more; later he went away to college, then he began dating and that cost a small fortune! But in his senior year at college he died, and since the funeral, he has not cost me a penny. Now which situation do you think I would rather have?"

As stewards of God, we need to look at things from a divine perspective. This earth weighs things by cost and quantity. Heaven looks at attitude and quality. May the perspective of our giving today be pleasing to our God. The deacons will now collect our offerings and God's tithe.

Sabbath 18

May 4, 2002

Offering: Outreach/Church Budget

“Christian stewardship is the matching of gift for matchless gift: our life and its whole substance for the gift of perfect love. And though God’s Son and His precious death are matchless—in the strange economy of God, our gift returned is made sufficient. My all for His all. Stewardship is your commitment: the asking of God to take you back unto Himself—all that you have and all that you are.”

(Lawrence L. Durgin)

No matter how much we give today and every Sabbath, we can never repay God—at least in human terms—but God in His mercy evens out the balance. When we give Him our all, He gives us His all. The offering and tithes that are collected today are symbolic of giving God our all—That’s why offering is worship. It is the laying down of ourselves and everything we are at the throne of God’s mercy. Let us now worship Him with our giving. The deacons will wait upon us.

Sabbath 19

May 11, 2002

Offering: Disaster/Famine Relief

Earthquakes, flooding, war and famine hit corners of our world with fervency, leaving immeasurable destruction and pain.

We watch the news as Christians and our hearts are compelled to respond. Today you can. On your behalf, and that of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist family, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) brings aid, warmth, comfort and hope to these people in the name of Christ. And long after the news cameras have moved on, ADRA remains to provide long-term rehabilitation.

Each year the Seventh-day Adventist church sets aside one Sabbath to collect a Disaster and Famine Relief Offering which provides resources for ADRA to respond on our behalf.

As the deacons come forth, please give generously to help our struggling neighbors in the world.

Sabbath 20
May 18, 2002
Offering: Church Budget

Money in itself is neither good nor bad; it is simply dangerous in that the love of it may become bad. With money a man can do much good; and with money he can do much evil. With money a man can selfishly serve his own desires; and with money he can generously answer to the cry of his neighbor's need. With money a man can buy his way to the forbidden things and facilitate the path of wrongdoing; and with money he can make it easier for someone else to live as God meant him to live. Money brings power, and power is always a double-edged thing, for it is powerful to good and powerful to evil. (William Barclay)

What kind of a grip does money have in your life? Who controls your thoughts, emotions and actions? May each of us give with the knowledge that God controls everything and that money is nothing but a tool in our hands to use for God.

Sabbath 21
May 25, 2002
Offering: Conference/Union

Seventeen-year-old Katie Fisher entered the Madison County Ohio Junior Livestock Sale hoping the lamb she had for sale would get a good price. For months Katie had been battling cancer. She had endured hospital stays and been through chemotherapy a number of times. Before the lamb went on the block, the auctioneer told the audience about Katie's condition, hoping his introduction would push the price-per-pound above the average of two dollars. It did, and then some. The lamb sold for \$11.50 per pound. Then the buyer gave it back, and suggested the auctioneer sell it again. That started a chain reaction. Families bought it and gave it back; businesses bought it and gave it back. Katie's mother said, "The first sale is the only one I remember. After that, I was crying too hard." They ended up selling the lamb 36 times that day, raising more than \$16,000.

What you have to give today may not be much. But remember that you are not giving to an ordinary person. You are giving to the One who multiplied a little boy's simple lunch to feed the thousands. Imagine what He can do with your humble giving. So give in the confidence of God's mighty power to multiply your gift beyond your wildest imagination. The deacons will now wait upon us.

Sabbath 22

June 1, 2002

Offering: Outreach/Church Budget

There are three kinds of giving: grudge giving, duty giving, and thanksgiving. Grudge giving says, "I hate to," duty giving says, "I ought to," thanksgiving says, "I want to." The first comes from constraint, the second from a sense of obligation, the third from a full heart. Nothing much is conveyed in grudge giving since "the gift without the giver is bare." Something more happens in duty giving, but there is no song in it. Thanksgiving is an open gate into the love of God. (Robert N. Rodenmayer)

As the deacons wait upon us today, ask yourself what kind of giver you are.

Sabbath 23
June 8, 2002
Offering: Division

“Love is the foundation for stewardship. As someone has well noted, ‘You can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving.’ Love is the motivation for everything we do, and this is particularly so in our stewardship. . . .

“People think that if a person is a millionaire, he or she will give much to God. Experience suggests this is probably not true. Giving has nothing to do with our financial state; it has everything to do with our love relationship to God. Those who love God the most make the greatest sacrifice for Him. This does not necessarily mean they give the largest monetary gift to God, although that is often the case. Giving is not measured by the amount of money given but by the sacrifice made for the purpose of giving. The widow who gave only two mites made the greatest sacrifice, because it was all she had.” (Toler and Towns, *Developing a Giving Church*, Beacon Hill Press, 11999, p. 155, 156.)

As you wait for the deacons to come to you today, ask yourself, “What is the foundation of my giving?”

Sabbath 24
June 15, 2002
Offering: Church Budget

A woman who was traveling in the mountains found a precious stone in a stream. The next day she met another traveler who was hungry, and the woman opened her bag to share her food. The hungry traveler saw the precious stone and asked the woman to give it to him.

She did so without hesitation. The traveler left rejoicing in his good fortune for he knew the stone was worth enough to give him security for a lifetime. But, a few days later, he came back to return the stone to the wise woman.

He said to the woman, "I know how valuable this stone is, but I give it back in the hope that you can give me something even more precious. Please give me what you have within you that enabled you to give me this stone."

Sometimes it's not the wealth you have but what's inside you that others need. As you give your money today, think about the other gifts that God has blessed you with. There's someone in your life who needs you. As you give today, challenge yourself to be a steward of more than money. The deacons will wait upon us now.

Sabbath 25
June 22, 2002
Offering: Conference/Union

In the great novel *Les Miserables* by Victor Hugo, Jean Valjean is a wayward who is taken in by a bishop and treated kindly, given food and a place to stay. Jean Valjean returns the bishop's kindness by stealing his expensive candlesticks. The story progresses to the scene where the police bring Jean back to the bishop's home for questioning. The evidence is clear—Jean Valjean is not only a thief, but also an ungrateful human being. The verdict is even clearer—Jean Valjean must be sent to jail. However, the story takes a most unexpected turn. The bishop gives the police a believable excuse for why Jean was caught with the candlestick in hand. The bishop intervenes to rescue Jean from imprisonment.

When the two are alone, Jean turns to the bishop in bewilderment and shame, “Why did you do that? You know I am guilty!” The bishop replies, “Life is for giving.”

The joys of giving are not experienced by big donors who give for tax-deductions or recognition. Those who experience the joys of giving have Jesus as Lord reigning in their hearts. May our offerings bring glory to our Lord.

Sabbath 26
June 29, 2002
Offering: Church Budget

William Borden, heir of the Borden milk fortune, was a wealthy Christian growing up in Chicago. When he was in his first year at Yale University he committed himself to reaching the Muslims of North India. Three years later he sailed for Egypt to study Arabic before going to India. He knew that money could not buy security, so before he left he gave away his inheritance of nearly one million dollars to various missions. He was in Cairo for four months when he contracted spinal meningitis and died within weeks. He had scrawled on a piece of paper under his pillow the words, "No reserve! No retreat! No regrets!"

On the great judgement day, when you are held accountable for all the resources that God had left you with on earth, will you also be able to say, "No reserve! No retreat! No regrets!" As you give today, think about your judgement day. The deacons will now wait upon us.

Sabbath 27

July 6, 2002

Offering: Outreach/Church Budget

In a great big church with fancy, polished furniture and many great givers, it was time for the offering call. It was the practice in this church for contributions to be announced along with the contributor's name. As every large contribution was announced, there was great applause. Toward the end, a very small contribution was announced. Then came the applause—just a scattered polite few—nothing like the loud, enthusiastic clapping that the other contributions received. At that point someone spoke up: “Listen! I think I hear the clapping of Pierced Hands!”

We give, not because of the recognition we get from the church or for a brass wall plaque bearing our name. We give for the love of the Pierced Hands of Christ. We give in awe and gladness for the gift of the cross. Let us rejoice as the deacons wait upon us today.

Sabbath 28
July 13, 2002
Offering: World Mission

As we all know, mission, by spreading the Gospel by any and all means available, is the primary work of the church. Ellen White's statement, "Every true disciple born into the kingdom of God is born as a missionary" (DA 195), is key to what the church is all about. There was a time when the word "missionary" meant primarily that a person left their home, crossed a salt water ocean and began working in some new place. This is still true, but in reality, mission has a broader meaning; it is something we are all involved in.

The World Mission offering that we will receive this morning is used specifically to fund outreach projects in various parts of the world. It finances medical teams, church planting initiatives, the training of people through projects like Global Mission, evangelistic campaigns held on the Adventist Global Communication Net and other outreach projects designed to spread the Gospel.

As the Lord adds his blessings to your offering this morning, you may be sure that, even though you may never hear or know exactly how and where it is used, it will have an impact on the worldwide outreach program of the church.

Sabbath 29
July 20, 2002
Offering: Church Budget

What do you think is the most important part of a plant? It is the seed. The roots, the leaves, the flowers, the fruits—all exist so there can be more and more seeds. Seeds vary in size from the 20,000 tiny seeds in a tobacco pod to a 22-pound coconut. Yet the size of the seed does not determine the size of the plant. For example, the tallest tree in the world, the California redwood, grows from a very small seed, while the large seed from a watermelon produces a short, creeping vine. Did you know that if a grain planted in Pharaoh's time in Egypt were to be continually harvested and the new seeds replanted and this done each year until today, the one seed that began in Pharaoh's time and all of its offspring would be more than enough to feed the world today?

Now think of your faith as a seed, and think of its potential, all the possibilities. Now multiply the effects of your faith as you share it with others. Can you see the power of your faith? Just as the farmer's yield is in proportion to the seeds he sows, God's harvest depends on the seeds of faith you sow. May what you give in faith today, be multiplied for God's use. The deacons will now wait upon us.

Sabbath 30
July 27, 2002
Offering: Conference/Union

“Jesus said it is impossible to serve two masters. When we try to serve two masters, we will be stretched, divided and absolutely ineffective. People can tell what we live for by whom we serve. In order to make ends meet today, many people try working two jobs for different companies. Some have been successful in moonlighting by carefully planning their appointments in life on a precise timetable. But no matter how hard we try, we Christians are not able to moonlight by serving God on one shift and wealth on another. Even though we might try for a while, the crisis will eventually come when we must decide either to serve God or money.” (Toler and Towns, *Developing a Giving Church*, Beacon Hill Press, 1999, p. 165.)

How tightly we hold on to our purse, how often we recount and calculate our offering, and how much we worry about our finances—these are all indicators of whom we serve—God or money. The question each of us needs to ask is “Have I let Jesus be Lord of all my life?” May our giving today reflect the answer to that question.

Sabbath 31
August 3, 2002
Offering: Outreach/Church Budget

At one time, Daniel Webster was considered the greatest of all living Americans. He was outstanding as a statesman, lawyer, orator and leader of men. Twenty-five national leaders attended a select banquet in his honor. One man at the banquet asked Mr. Webster, "Sir, what is the greatest thought that ever entered your mind?" Without hesitation, Webster replied, "The greatest thought that ever entered my mind was the thought of my responsibility to God." As he spoke, he wept, excused himself from the banquet, and went outside to get control of his emotions. When he returned he talked for thirty minutes about man's responsibility to God. (Carl G. Johnson, *Ready for Anything*, Bethany Fellowship Press)

What would happen, if we, like Webster, truly felt the weight of our responsibility to God? Can you imagine how effective evangelism and missions would be if we truly believed in our responsibility to God? May our giving today reflect our responsibility as stewards of God's kingdom. The deacons will wait upon us now.

Sabbath 32
August 10, 2002
Offering: Division

There was a little Japanese boy whose parents enrolled him in a Christian school to learn the English language. One day, in order to practice his English, the boy borrowed a book from the school library. It was a copy of the gospel of Mark. He took it home and read it through again and again, fascinated by the story. He went to his teacher and asked, "Did this man really live?" The teacher answered, "Yes, of course!" The boy responded, "Then I want to know how I can be one of his followers." The boy grew up to be a great missionary in Japan. The life of Jesus powerfully attracts people to the cross.

The same life and power of Jesus that motivates one to change motivates one to give. You don't give because you have to or because you're afraid of what will happen if you don't. You give because you can't help but be affected by the life and power of Jesus in you. The deacons will now wait upon us.

Sabbath 33
August 17, 2002
Offering: Church Budget

On the Australian coat of arms is a picture of an emu and a kangaroo. These animals were chosen because they share a characteristic that appealed to the forefathers of the country. Both the emu and kangaroo can move only forward, not back. The emu's three-toed foot causes it to fall if it tries to go backwards, and the kangaroo is prevented from moving in reverse by its large tail. Those who truly choose to follow Jesus become like the emu and kangaroo, moving only forward, never back.

How much less we'd need to travel on this earth if we could only move forward. And as disciples of Jesus, it is possible to move ahead without falling behind. A stewardship lifestyle enables us to move forward. As the deacons wait upon us, may the Holy Spirit help us commit our lives to a stewardship lifestyle.

Sabbath 34
August 24, 2002
Offering: Conference/Union

Outside the town of Scarborough in England there is an old castle that was built in the 12th century. It was built on a huge rock that juts out into the sea. On stormy nights the waves beat against the walls of the castle, high and hard. And in the castle is a dungeon with an open window. In the year 1665 George Fox was held prisoner in this dark, cold dungeon with the open window. Many a night the waves would flood the cold dungeon with even colder water, giving Fox not one dry spot to rest. The jailer thought the torture of the cold waves beating on Fox would affect him. But in his journal, Fox wrote this of the torturous waves: “I was too occupied thinking of other things, to worry about the storms. I endured, as seeing Him who is invisible.”

When the storms of life beat down on you, and you are at the point of hopelessness, think on higher things. Keep your eyes on Him who is mightier than the storm. Think also on higher things when financial burdens bring you down. The deacons will wait upon us.

Sabbath 35
August 31, 2002
Offering: Church Budget

On his deathbed, Archbishop Janis Matulis of Latvia asked for the song “Oh, when I am alone, when I am alone, give me Jesus.” When the song was sung, the archbishop said, “ Do you know why this song means so much to me? Three times war passed over Latvia, killing two-fifths of our people. They burned down my church and destroyed the Bibles and hymnals. They took away my wife, and I never saw her again. When it was all gone, I realized that I had nothing else in this world but Jesus Christ. It was like a breath of freedom. From that moment on, I learned how to use whatever came my way—little bits of medicine left over, a piece of coal, apples, spices—so that somehow the sacrament of God’s love would be shared with the larger community because of Jesus Christ.”

When you give as an act of love, be it small or large, you are being God’s ambassadors. It is never about what you give or how much you give. Instead it is about WHY you give. As the deacons come to you for the offering and tithe today, ask yourself, “Why am I giving?” May your answer be pleasing to the courts of heaven.

Sabbath 36
September 7, 2002
Offering: Outreach/Church Budget

There was an old woman who lived in a small room in an old attic. Her only connection to the outside world was a tiny window that let in a little light and a little air. Perched on the edge of that window was a broken pot that held a strawberry plant. There was nothing else in that old room that brought the old woman joy as did that strawberry plant. Explaining the importance of the plant, she said, "I am too poor to keep a pet. But through this plant I see how every living thing can live only by the power of God. As I watch it grow, I feel that God is near and will help me."

As you worship God with offerings and tithe, count the blessings in your personal life that demonstrate God's mighty power. The deacons will now wait upon us.

Sabbath 37

September 14, 2002

Offering: World Mission Budget (Go One Million)

Go One Million is an exciting new plan to train, equip and send out one million Adventist lay people around the world to share the good news about Jesus with those who have no hope.

Picture a 30-year-old stockbroker in New York City. She's rich and increased with goods, and has need of nothing except for that gnawing emptiness she sometimes feels.

Picture a village farmer in Cambodia. He longs for peace and freedom, but can't escape his constant fear of the spirits.

Picture your neighbors. Do they know the joy and hope that can come only from Jesus?

Today's offering will help empower one million lay Seventh-day Adventists to share the love of Jesus. Your gift to *Go One Million* will help bring an eternal hope to people around the world.

Sabbath 38
September 21, 2002
Offering: Church Budget

In the early days of Christianity in England, there were many villages without a church. People would just erect a cross to mark the spot where they would gather every week to praise and worship God. Soon cemeteries also began to grow around these crosses because people wanted to be buried within the sight of the cross.

Now we all know that it makes little difference where we are buried. But we do need to live and die within sight of the cross. The way we use our offerings and the tithe to worship God is a measurement of how close we live to the Cross. When we live in the shadow of the Cross, we are forever covered by God's protective care. May our offerings today be given in an attitude of worship, in the shadow of the Cross.

Sabbath 39
September 28, 2002
Offering: Conference/Union

Did you know that if our earth were not tilted, there would be no seasons and that the vapors from the ocean would move north and south at such a rate that the continents would be piled with ice? Did you know that if our moon were only 50,000 miles away instead of the more than 200,000 miles than it actual is, that ocean tides would be so gigantic that the continents would be submerged and the mountains eroded? Did you know that if the crust of the earth were 10 feet thicker, there would be no oxygen for life? And that if the ocean were a few feet deeper, all the carbon dioxide would be absorbed and there would be no plant life?

These illustrations demonstrate just how dependent we are on God as Creator and Sustainer. Why then do we so often try to take control of things in our life? Instead, every day we need to remind ourselves of how small and insignificant we are in comparison to our great God. Today, let us give in full realization of the mighty Creator God we serve.

Sabbath 40
October 5, 2002
Offering: Outreach/Church Budget

A poor, illiterate, newly baptized church member was attending church when the preacher stood up to announce the collection of offerings. He spoke of dedication and thankfulness, of giving back to the Lord in joy and abundance. The offering plate was passed. The young woman had nothing to give—no money, no belongings. Yet she knew very clearly that she had been richly blessed with a new life in Christ. She now had a tremendous, lasting feeling of worth and belonging. As the plate came to her, she silently set it on the floor, got up—and stood in it.

Today, give God more than money. Give Him your life. Take a moment to bow your heads in a prayer of consecration. Give God all of you.

Sabbath 41
October 12, 2002
Offering: Division

Richard Warren sees his giving benefit his life in seven ways:

1. Giving makes me more like God
2. Giving draws me closer to God
3. Giving breaks the grip of materialism
4. Giving strengthens my faith
5. Giving is an investment for eternity
6. Giving blesses me in return
7. Giving makes me happy

Do you ever stop and ask yourself how giving benefits your life? As you wait for the deacons to come to you today, ask yourself, "How does my giving benefit me?" May the answers you find in your heart add joy to your relationship with the Savior.

Sabbath 42
October 19, 2002
Offering: Church Budget

There are three kinds of givers -- the flint, the sponge and 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?

God does not look at what it takes to make you give. He is not impressed with the pressures or the fears or the expectations of a reward that may make you give. No. God is touched by the sweetness of your heart—the heart that has no strings tied to the purse, but has a cord of prayer that reaches heaven. So ask yourself, “Am I the flint, the sponge or the honeycomb?” The deacons will now wait upon us.

Sabbath 43
October 26, 2002
Offering: Conference/Union

There is a famous statue in Edinburgh. It is not one of a king, or a queen, or a president. It is the statue of a mongrel dog named Bobbie. So long as Bobbie's master was alive, nobody paid much attention to the little dog. But when the master died, the people of the town noticed that the dog stayed on its master's grave. Many tried to give Bobbie a new home, but he would not leave the grave. Days and weeks and months passed by as Bobbie stayed at the grave until his own death.

We learn to love from those who love. When we receive love, it is easy to give love. God has shown us His great love for us in so many ways. His greatest act of love was the death of His only begotten Son. How do we show our love for Him? Every facet of a disciple's life reflects his love for his Master. Do we show our love for God when we worship Him through our offerings? The deacons will now wait upon us.

Sabbath 44
November 2, 2002
Offering: Outreach/Church Budget

The eye level of a dog is approximate 18 inches. Depending on the height of the individual, the eye level of a human being is five feet or more. Because of this big difference, it is very difficult to train seeing-eye dogs for the blind. The dogs that help the blind have to be able to raise their eyes to abnormal heights. What is an obstruction crossing the path of a blind person at the height of five feet is not an obstruction for a dog. So the dog needs to be trained to look up to see what a human being would see. This is very difficult. And until this happens, the dog is useless to a blind person.

As Christian disciples, we too need to raise our eye-level to see life as God sees it. As with the seeing-eye dogs, so it is with us. Our natural, sinful tendency is to look at things from an earthly perspective. But until we can look at life from a heavenly perspective, we are useless to the cause of the kingdom, and can help no one find the way to the Cross.

As we worship God today with our offering and tithes, may we see the potential of our giving from a divine perspective.

Sabbath 45
November 9, 2002
Offering: Annual Sacrifice (Global Mission)

Over the past 12 years Global Mission has taken the life-changing good news about Jesus around the globe. From hardened hearts in the secular West to the diverse millions in the 10/40 Window, which stretches from Northwest Africa through the Middle East and into Asia.

Jesus said, "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world.. "Matthew 24:14). What a privilege it is for us to be part of that exciting promise.

The Annual Sacrifice offering is Global Mission's annual offering for front-line mission work. It began in the early 1920s when the Adventist Church faced the impending collapse of its international mission program. Church members rallied to save the work and, in North America alone, the average gift per church member was equal to six days' wages. Thank you for your contribution to this historic offering which is still vital in 2002.

Sabbath 46
November 16, 2002
Offering: Church Budget

When he was 15 years old, John Goddard set 127 goals in his life. His goals included 1) retracing the route of Marco Polo; 2) diving in a submarine; 3) milking a poisonous snake; and 4) taking off and landing on an aircraft carrier. By the time he was 59 years old, Goddard had accomplished 107 of his 127 goals—including retracing the route of Marco Polo, diving in a submarine, milking a poisonous snake, and taking off and landing on an aircraft carrier.

Christianity offers us the highest goals possible. Paul stated his single goal quite simply, “For to me, to live is Christ.” What are your goals in life? Where does stewardship fit into your plans? May your giving be part of your spiritual growth in the Lord. The deacons will now wait upon us.

Sabbath 47
November 23, 2002
Offering: Conference/Union

In a famous cathedral in Rome is a magnificent fresco of awesome beauty. Every colorful detail is painted with patience. Yet for centuries, only few visitors to the cathedral actually looked at the art long enough to appreciate it. Why? It was not because the artist was inferior to others or because the visitors did not care for it. The reason was because of the angle and the height at which the art was painted. Every time guests tried to look up that high for too long, they suffered with stiff necks and strained eyes.

Finally, to solve the problem, a large mirror was placed just above the floor level. Now what was once too distant and difficult to observe was down to a more human level. Guests were now seated around the mirror to study and appreciate all the splendor of the superb painting.

We are asked to be the mirror that reflects God. For many, comprehending an invisible God is difficult to do. But experiencing an act of love by human hands brings the image of God into focus. Our offerings help bring the image of a loving God closer to people who would otherwise not be able to see Him. Won't you be part of bringing God to everyone? The deacons will now wait upon us.

Sabbath 48
November 30, 2002
Offering: Church Budget

Patricia West discovered that her blood contained some unusual antibodies found in only one out of every 5,000 people. She was told these odds increased to one in 10,000 because 19 out of 20 people are either unable or unwilling to donate blood. As a result the doctor asked if she would be willing to donate blood in case someone needed some. Patricia gladly agreed. Many years went by and Patricia moved thousands of miles away.

One day Patricia was rushed to the hospital. She was bleeding severely and there was no compatible blood at the hospital. Without the right blood match, Patricia would die. In desperation, the doctors searched the computerized database of rare blood. And they finally found a match, thousands of miles away. It was Patricia's own blood! —The blood she had given years before.

Life is like that. What we hoard and try to keep as treasure somehow gets away. What we give away so often comes back. May God's blessing be with you as give to His cause.

Sabbath 49
December 7, 2002
Offering: Outreach/Church Budget

“The greatest addiction today is the habit of accumulating money. We forget why we want it, what it is for, and what we are sacrificing for it. We don’t need to give away our money, or not earn it, but we do need to give away our love for it.’ . . .

“Money is life. The dollars in our wallet or purse represent the time we invest at our place of employment. Our paycheck is an exchange for giving ourselves to our job. The money we get represents our life. Therefore, we give part of our life when we place our offering in the offering plate.

“Charles Swindoll wrote, ‘We honor God by first giving to Him from our paycheck. In doing so, we acknowledge His ownership of everything before we enjoy any of it ourselves. Whatever your income, give a portion to the Lord first. He will be honored and glorified by your trust.’” (Toler and Towns, *Developing a Giving Church*, Beacon Hill Press, 1999, p. 49, 50.)

May what we give to God today bring honor to Him alone. The deacons will now wait upon us.

Sabbath 50
December 14, 2002
Offering: Division

As gifts to Baby Jesus, the wise men brought gold, frankincense and myrrh. Frankincense and myrrh are gum resins from trees that once grew abundantly in southern Arabia. By the time they were exported into Egypt, Babylon, and Syria by use of well-guarded caravans, the profit was usually 500 per cent. That's how valuable these substances were! Today, however, there is no demand for frankincense and myrrh. What was once as valuable as gold is almost worthless today. The value of earthly goods fluctuates with time. What is worth a lot today may not be worth anything at all tomorrow. The only thing constant in value is God's love for us.

How many of us hold fast to our material wealth, afraid that we may lose it all? More valuable than the money you have ready to put in the offering plate, is the love you have in your heart for God. Heaven does not have an account book of how much you bring to church every week, but heaven does keep tabs on who has a hold of your heart! The deacons will now wait upon us.

Sabbath 51
December 21, 2002
Offering: Church Budget

A missionary in the South Pacific Islands was explaining to a group of children the custom and significance of giving gifts at Christmas. "Giving gifts," she said, "expresses love and reminds us of the perfect gift of love we received from God: Jesus." Later that week, a young native boy came to the missionary's side and said, "I love you and want you to have this." He pulled from a straw basket the most beautiful shell the missionary had ever seen. As she admired its beauty, she recognized it as a special shell only found on the far side of the island, a half-day's walk from the village. When confronted by this, the boy smiled and said, "Long walk part of gift!"

Part of Jesus' gift of the Cross, is His long walk in humanity's shoes. Throughout eternity, He will wear our shoes to continually express His oneness with us and His love for us. Our worship in offerings is an expression of our love to him. Let us open our hearts to Him as we give. The deacons will now wait upon us.

Sabbath 52
December 28, 2002
Offering: Conference/Union

It is estimated that if the widow's mite had been deposited at the "First National Bank, Jerusalem" to draw four percent interest semi-annually, the fund today would total \$4,800,000,000,000,000,000,000. If a bank on earth could multiply the widow's mite to such an astronomical figure, think what treasures this dedicated woman will have in heaven where "moth and rust doth not corrupt."

When God receives a love gift from one of His dear children, all the powers of heaven participate in multiplying that token to wrought miracles on earth. May God bless you as you humbly give to God your sincere love gift. The deacons will now wait upon us.