

DYNAMIC

Steward

the power to live to submit to abide to give to serve

July-September, 2005

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**Making Disciples—
Growing Faithful Stewards**

Volume 9 Number 3

Disciplined or Mentored



*Claire L. Eva, Assistant Director
General Conference Stewardship Department*

“I don’t know how!”

It was Friday afternoon. We were all home together and ready for our Friday chores. Or at least I thought so. My young daughter Amy was whining about her assigned task: “Dust House.” As a busy mother who was trying to get organized and divide up the work, I thought I had done a fair job of it. I wrote out the chores and fastened the list to the refrigerator.

What was her moan? “Mom, I don’t know how to do it!” Now, I felt anyone—even a young woman-child—would know how to dust. “It’s easy,” I replied. “Just take the cloth and wipe it over the furniture.”

“But I don’t know how to do it!” she whimpered again.

This just wasn’t working. What was I to do? I was busy with my own chores and just didn’t have time for this! But something moved me to take that time. “Would you like for me to help you, to show you how?”

“Yes,” she replied. So we proceeded to go through the house, and step-by-step, dusted each piece of furniture. That was the last time I heard the whining and complaining.

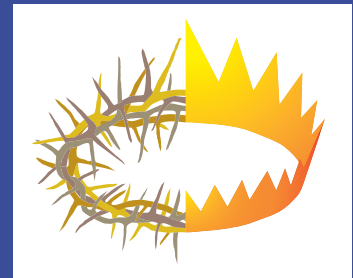
Prescribing and mentoring

There is a difference between telling and doing—between prescribing and mentoring. A vast difference. Jesus came to show us what the law could not do. He came to mentor twelve men who later “turned the world upside down” with the Gospel message of Jesus Christ. It took over three years of time and patience and a big pouring out of Holy Spirit, but Christ was not faint. He knew it would come about.

In this special issue of *Dynamic Steward* we will take a good look at discipleship and stewardship and how the two are intimate and parallel concepts with flesh and bones. You cannot be a disciple without becoming a steward. And you can’t be a steward without first being a disciple. But the good news is that, in either case, Jesus is our Mentor and Partner. Just like Amy, you will not set out to meet your task without a Friend by your side.

In this new quinquennium, you begin afresh, ready to be equipped and accompanied by your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He has picked up His cloth. Are you ready to follow?

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Exploring partnership with God

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Adult and Youth Resources

New—Biblical Stewardship Foundations in DVD!

Currently the General Conference Stewardship Department is producing “Let God Be God”—Part 1, also known as Biblical Stewardship Foundations, in DVD format. The DVDs will be graphically enhanced and will be user-friendly, so that you may stop and start the program according to the menu provided. We are excited about the potential for dubbing the DVDs in various languages. Our projected date for release is September 2005. Be looking for more news!



Knowing and Enjoying God: Sermons for Youth

In this issue of *Dynamic Steward* we feature a series of eight sermons for youth by our former assistant director and editor, Fylvia Fowler Kline. The series, entitled, “Knowing and Enjoying God,” is packed full of excellent stories and illustrations. And it is written in a style that will keep your interest throughout.

Each of the eight sermon titles begin with the phrase: STEWARDSHIP IS ... and follow with: Being in His Care, A Life of Worship, A Partnership with God, A Pathway of Discipleship, A Friendship with God, Knowing God, Enjoying God, and The Saga of a Loving God.

These stewardship sermons are an excellent resource for adult leaders and youth. They may be downloaded for free on our website at adventiststewardship.com or you may receive a copy for \$2.00 S&H, by writing to: Youth Sermons, General Conference Stewardship Department, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, Maryland 20904-6600 USA.

stewardship window

more from
the director's desk ...



Stewardship Seminars Around the Globe

March and April were full months for Acting Director, Jean-Luc Lézeau. Stewardship seminars were held in the following locations:

March 3-7. The West Central African Union and East Cameroon Mission. More than 110 administrators, pastors, church treasurers, and lay members met together in Bertoua.

March 9-13. The Central and South Cameroon Mission hosted more than 125 participants.

March 14-17. A Stewardship Advisory was held in the Southern Africa Indian Ocean Division in Johannesburg.



Bahamas Conference

April 15-17. A Stewardship Weekend was sponsored by the Bahamas Conference in the West Indies Union.

May 1-15. Stewardship seminars were held in Reunion and Mauritius, Indian Ocean Union Mission. All churches in the islands were represented in these two meetings.

Steward or Disciple?

Jean-Luc Lézeau, Acting Director
General Conference Stewardship



When Jesus gave the Great Commission to His disciples, He used an imperative. That imperative was not a command to make more converts, but to make disciples. This is the focus of our mission to make disciples.

In Jesus' last recorded prayer, He made a startling comment to His Father: "I have glorified you on earth. I have finished the work that you have given me to do" (Jn 17:4). Jesus does not mention the miracles He performed or the multitudes He preached to. But forty times, Jesus mentions the twelve who were *His work*. They were vital to His mission. He gave His life for billions of people, but during His ministry on earth, He devoted His time to the twelve. Discipleship doesn't happen by accident. One has to be intentional about it.

Plan "B"

This story has been told about Jesus. After He ascended to heaven, one of the angels asked Him: "What plan do You have to continue the work You began on earth?" Without hesitation, Jesus answered: "I trained and left precise instructions to twelve men." A bit doubtful about Jesus' strategy, another angel asked, "Yes, but if they fail, what is Plan B?" "There is no Plan B," Jesus replied.

It is only a story, but it is true. It is ironic that Jesus would ask those whom, after more than three years of training, managed to abandon Him at the most crucial moment of His ministry. Amazing, that these men who had not yet understood His ministry with them, would be responsible for such a daunting task!

The twelve had discovered what discipleship was all about. They had walked daily with their Master, learning through parables (Mk 4:33). Sometimes Jesus went the "second mile" to help them understand what He was talking about that they were to live *in submission* to their Master, so that they would become *like* Him.

Not one, but both

For years, the Stewardship Department has used the terms "steward" and "disciple" interchangeably. When we accept Christ as Lord of our life, this experience is reflective of all the definitions we may have of a disciple or a steward. The Lordship principle is at the crux of the life of a disciple and steward. It is not by accident that "Lord" is used 747 times in the New Testament 92 times in the books of Acts alone. If Jesus is Lord of my life, I shall not want or worry about shortcomings in my life. His biddings will enable me, and I will witness to His love and sacrifice for me.

Is making disciples easy? If we take Acts 6:7 literally, it looks like a simple operation: "And the word of God increased; and the number of disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly." Unfortunately, becoming a disciple of Christ is a long process. It took Jesus over three years to disciple the twelve. He did not delegate the training to someone else. Although the concept of making disciples was not new, what Jesus had in mind was a new ministry that was to change the world.

Jesus chose the twelve to be *with* Him. They would learn by associating with Him. (Mt 4:18-22; 9:9). Another privileged instruction time they had was when they were alone with Him. He told them: "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you..." (Mk 4:11). During these times they learned that discipleship was not a matter of what they did, but an outgrowth of what they were: rooted in their relationship with Jesus. They were to take His cross, (Mt 10:5-6; Lk 14:26-27) a cross that doesn't come cheaply. They were told that obedience was not optional for a Christian, but they were to discern the difference between the legalistic obedience



of the Pharisees and a Spirit enabling obedience. They were told that there was only one way to show their discipleship: "...bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples" (Jn 15:7-8). But the true fruit is the fruit prepared by the Father, born of total submission to Christ and generated by His Spirit (Ep 2:10).

A startling comment

When He was about to leave them, Jesus made another startling comment to his disciples: "It is to your advantage that I go away..." (Jn 16:7). They must have felt bewildered when Jesus spoke these words. They were following Him, awaiting His decisions, trying to understand what He was saying, trying to perform miracles like Him, but they had not yet mastered the skill. They were fed daily by His ministry, and suddenly, it was to be for their own good that He should go? This was the acid test of their discipleship. They were to stand on their own feet and live the lessons Jesus taught them. Theories are valid during instruction, but if you don't transfer them to daily life, they are useless. Jesus knew His disciples were helpless by themselves. And so He promised they would "receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you..." (Ac 1:8).

A disciple is ...

"Biblical discipling is the art of shaping the life of an individual into a growing partnership with God. It begins with the assurance of salvation through the acceptance of the Gospel, and then continues by integrating Christ's lordship into every area of life. How do you describe a disciple?"

- *A disciple is passionately in love with Jesus Christ.* If Jesus Christ is not our consuming passion, then someone or something else will be; and to that degree, we practice a form of idolatry.
- *A disciple maintains intimacy with God through a daily devotional life.* The level of passion in any relationship is in direct proportion to the level of intimacy.
- *A disciple integrates God into every area of life.* It is not enough to just have a devotional life. We need a second level of intimacy of inviting God to share every part of our life. In this way, intimacy and passion grow in our relationship with God.

This story has been told about Jesus. After He ascended to heaven, one of the angels asked Him: "What plan do You have to continue the work You began on earth?"

• *A disciple makes God a priority in every decision.* If God is really God, then He is the most important factor in every area of life for when we leave Him out of decision-making, we are the ones in control.

• *A disciple actively shares Christ with those in his or her sphere of influence.* This does not mean the ability to explain all doctrines or answer all questions. It simply means sharing the testimony of what God has done in our life" From *Seeking God's Heart*, by Ben Maxson.

Effective discipleship and stewardship will take time. The root of the word disciple is the same as found in *discipline*. It doesn't happen by itself. We have to be intentional about it. But do we have a choice?

Discipleship . . .

Salvation is free, but discipleship costs everything we have. *Billy Graham*

Discipleship is anything that causes what is believed in the heart to have demonstrable consequences in our daily life. *Eugene Peterson*

We are on the right track when we define the demands of discipleship not in terms of what we think or feel but in terms of what the cross meant to Jesus. *Jerry Harvill*

Full participation in the life of God's Kingdom and in the vivid companionship of Christ comes to us only through appropriate exercise in the disciplines for life in the Spirit. *Dallas Willard*

quotes

Incredible Partnership

*Benjamin C. Maxson, Pastor
Paradise Seventh-day Adventist Church
Paradise, California*



*This sermon on the biblical theme of partnership with God is a chapter in Elder Maxson's new book, *The Missing Connection: Where Life Meets Lordship*.*

Partners, not employees

Most of us know the theory that stewardship is more than tithes and offerings; that stewardship is more than managing money. When we stop to think about it, we recognize that God really is owner of everything we often claim as ours. We struggle applying this to our daily life, but we at least acknowledge the concept. We talk about working for God and managing His resources. But as stewards we are more than God's employees—we are partners with God.

There are different types of partnership. Normally, partners are two equals who bring something of equal value to the relationship. In some cases, one partner is the investor with the money and the other an expert with the knowledge. Sometimes partnership is a reward for a special service or superior performance. Our partnership with God, however, is quite different. After all, what can we bring to this partnership?

God is owner of all. He gives us abilities and talents, He provides all the resources, He gives us our very life. We really don't bring anything of our own to this relationship with God; we merely choose to accept the privilege of partnering with Him. And God will not force us into this incredible partnership.

Interdependency and intimacy

God's partnership with Noah provided a means to save the human race. When God chose Moses, Israel marched out of Egypt. When God inspired Daniel, prophecy revealed the future of God's people. But the ultimate partnership was in the incarnation, when God and man become one. This is a powerful model of how God works with us in a unique partnership.

Jesus modeled interdependence with God. Throughout the Gospel of John, we find repeated references to this partnership: "The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands" (3:35). "I and the Father are one" (10:30). These and many other passages reveal the intimacy between the Father and the Son. They are models of what God desires for us.

The gospel of John provides a foundation for understanding the depth of our potential intimacy with God. Speaking of the coming of the Holy Spirit, Jesus says: "On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you" (14:20). In John 15, the vine provides a vivid metaphor of this partnership: "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing" (15:5). And Jesus closes His prayer to His Father with "that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (17:21).

Identity, position, and power

Our partnership with God is a productive partnership. Paul says "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Ep 2:10). In Philippians, he declares that "it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose" (2:13).

In addition, God takes us who have been slaves to sin (Rm 6), and lifts us to the position of friends (Jn 15:13-15). This friendship includes being "seated with Christ

SCRIPTURE:
John 15:5

on His throne in heavenly places” (Rv 3:21; Ep 2:7). So this partnership includes identity—we are part of God’s family and His friends. It includes position—He places us at His side. It includes power—all we need to do His will (Php 4:19; 2P 1:3-4). And it produces fruit or results (Ep 2:10; Jn 15:5).

Our role in partnership

So what is our role in this partnership? First, we must be willing to accept it as a gift. We cannot earn it, and God does not give it to us because of our ability. Instead, it is an incredible act of God’s grace which makes it possible. This is why this partnership is so humbling to us. We would rather think of God needing to reward our performance than to accept it as a gift.

Second, we must realize that this gift goes far beyond the human partnership. It becomes a union—a blending of the divine within the human. We become partakers of His divine nature (2P 1:4). We do not become divine, but God dwells within us. We do not lose our identity; instead we discover our true identity. We discover who God created us to be in the first place.

God created Adam in His own image, to reflect His image. In an incredible act of intimacy, God shaped him with His own hands. Then He gave him dominion over the world He had just created. Thus, God began a unique partnership with man. When sin destroyed this partnership, God restored our union with Him through the life and death of Jesus Christ and through the ministry of the Holy Spirit that makes the presence of Christ in our hearts a living reality (Ep 3:16-19). Christ, dwelling within the human heart, provides a new union, a new image, a new intimacy. And this partnership produces powerful results.

“All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service. When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us”—*Desire of Ages*, p 668.

Stepping forward

The third step is to step forward in faith, exercising the partnership He has given us. We make choices, and as we walk with God, His Spirit guides and empowers our choices. We act in a partnership that goes far beyond our very best imagination. We do not work for Him, but rather are in intimate union with Him.

No human partnership can compare. No human partnership can illustrate. The very God of the universe calls us to return to Him, to the relationship for which we were created. Then every part of life becomes an exciting adventure of walking with God, applying partnership with Him to each moment and each action.

*We act in a partnership
that goes far beyond our
very best imagination.
We do not work for Him,
but rather are in intimate
union with Him.*



Falling in Love

*Pardon Mwansa, President
Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division
Harare, Zimbabwe*



“Falling in Love” is one of our classic sermons on discipleship, originally printed in the April-June 1998 issue of Dynamic Steward.

Introduction

Solomon says there are four things that he cannot understand: the soar of an eagle in the air; the slither of a serpent on a rock; the sail of a ship in the sea; and the way of a man with a maid (Pv 30:18, 19). When you fall in love, you cannot help but give yourself to the one you love. When you fall in love, you do not mind doing anything for the one you love. You cannot love without giving—not just gifts—but your entire being. I want to share with you a love story, the story of a man who fell in love with Jesus. We often hear of people falling in and out of love. But when you fall in love with Jesus Christ and then you fall out of that love, it is because of you, not because of Him. Because Jesus will never give up, irrespective of what you do or who you are.

His name and reputation

Hard work and perseverance made Zacchaeus chief tax collector of the Roman government. His position came with control and power. Soon he began taking bribes. He would give half to the Roman government and keep the other half for himself. Zacchaeus became so wealthy from cheating and robbing the people that he earned himself a name in Jericho—sinner (Lk 19: 2, 8). To earn a name, you don’t have to do much—you just have to major in your behavior and people will give you a name. If your behavior is good, you get a good name. Zacchaeus’ behavior was really bad, so he got the name “sinner.” In Jericho, Zacchaeus was synonymous with sinner.

His need for forgiveness

Jesus, whose main mission was to save the lost, was passing through Jericho (v. 10). Some of us think Jesus only loves righteous people. But God so loved the world that He gave His only Son that whosoever believes in Him could have eternal life (Jn 3:16). When Jesus walked down the streets of Jericho, He was looking for an opportunity to save sinners.

Zacchaeus had heard about Christ Jesus. He had heard of Jesus’ power to heal. He had heard of Jesus’ power to raise the dead. He had heard of Jesus’ power to forgive. And Zacchaeus was the sinner in Jericho. When Zacchaeus hears that Jesus is coming to town, he feels an urgency to meet Him. He leaves the tax booth, oblivious of his responsibilities. He spots the crowd up ahead. Jesus is surrounded by hoards of people, and Zacchaeus can’t see Jesus. He’s too short.

Driven by an overpowering feeling of love, Zacchaeus climbs a tree just to see Christ. Caught up in the excitement, the people below beckon to those to their left, others to their right. But no one looks up. No one looks up in the tree. Why would anyone look up into a tree? But with His divine eyes, Jesus was drawn to look up into the tree, into the seeking heart of Zacchaeus.

Calling him by name, Jesus says, “Zacchaeus, I want to eat at your place.” Amazed, Zacchaeus exclaims: “Jesus, is coming to my home, the sinner’s home!” And Zacchaeus welcomes Jesus gladly because he has finally found someone who loves him just as he is. He had never felt forgiveness and love until now.

We can imagine the crowd following Jesus and Zacchaeus at an uncomfortable distance. They hang around an open window, eaves-dropping on the sinner and Jesus. They wonder what the two men have in common. They cannot imagine why Jesus would want to be seen with a man like Zacchaeus.

SCRIPTURE:
Luke 19:1-10

His response to love

Zacchaeus does not hear Jesus call him a sinner. He only hears words of love and acceptance and his heart is touched. The love of Jesus comes into his heart and he falls in love with Jesus. He falls so in love that he stands up and makes a declaration: “Look, my Lord” (v 8). The word Lord in Greek means “master.” Zacchaeus calls Jesus Master. He says, “Look! My Lord. Right now I give half of my possessions to the poor.” Who preached stewardship to Zacchaeus? Did he attend a stewardship seminar? Did he receive counsel from the General Conference Stewardship Director? Zacchaeus sits at the feet of Jesus. And as he beholds Jesus; he beholds a man whose entire life speaks giving—giving love to others.

Half of one’s bank balance; half of one’s investment—that’s a lot of money! But when you are touched by love, the gift is measured neither by size nor value. And Zacchaeus was touched by the love of God. His magnanimous gesture says, “If you, Jesus, love the poor, and I am in love with you, I will love the poor too!” But Zacchaeus does not stop at giving. He continues to say “And if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay them back four times the amount I took from them.” Now that was not an easy task. Keeping his pledge to Jesus would cost him much time in recalculating his account ledger of past years of embezzlement and put himself through a lot of humiliation and embarrassment.

When you become a child of God, when you are in love with Jesus, your heart is changed so dramatically that you want to make things right with anyone you may have wronged. What was Jesus’ response to Zacchaeus’ pledge of love? “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham” (v 9).

Conclusion

You cannot read this story without seeing the truth—you cannot love without giving. You cannot fall in love with Jesus and be negligent of the things that Christ is mindful about. As you look at this story, I want you to imagine the town of Jericho the day after Jesus’ visit. Imagine what Zacchaeus does. He gathers up half of his possessions, loads them, perhaps on a donkey. People see him nudging the heavy-laden donkey down to the marketplace. And he sets up shop, not to sell, but to give away. He encourages the poor to come without fear. He says I promised the Lord yesterday. I made a commitment to the Lord. I love Jesus and I’m asking you to take that silk scarf, or that brass vase, or ivory bowl . . .

Now imagine what happens the next Sabbath. Zacchaeus goes to church and the church is packed. Everybody is wondering what he will do next. One from the crowd boldly approaches Zacchaeus and asks him, “What has happened to you? Why the change?” Zacchaeus responds with a glow on his face, with a big smile, “I’m in love. I’m in love with Jesus! He has become my Lord and I am His steward! The things that I have, I give to my Lord to use as He desires. And I have seen that He loves the poor, so I choose to give my possessions to the poor.” The bold one responds, “If that is what Jesus can do for you, Zacchaeus, then He can do it for me!”

Continue imagining. It’s the first business day since Zacchaeus met Jesus. He knocks at the door of a businessman. The door opens. The man angrily says, “What do you want from me now, Zacchaeus? I have done my duty! I’ve paid all my taxes!” But Zacchaeus says, “I haven’t come to collect anything. I’ve come to apologize. I’ve been overcharging you. I’m very sorry. I’ve come to return the money I owe

To earn a name, you don’t have to do much—you just have to major in your behavior and people will give you a name.

you. You see, I have fallen in love with the Lord Jesus. And because I love Him, I have accepted His philosophies and principles.”

Soon Jericho witnesses the testimony of him who once was a sinner but is now one of the greatest givers in recorded Scripture. Zacchaeus is no longer synonymous with sinner. Zacchaeus is now a reflection of the Master. Zacchaeus is now living proof of the power of the Holy Spirit!

When Jesus comes into your life, you can no longer be the same. Are you in love with Him? If you are, do your works and your behavior speak of your love for Jesus?

You may pray: “My Lord Jesus, make me fall in love like I’ve never fallen in love before. Make me a new person. Change me. Give me a name. Come abide in my home, in my family, in my heart, from now and forever more. Amen.



Costly Discipleship

Kigundu Ndwiga
Stewardship Director
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*“We got a rude shock
when we discovered our
goods cost more than our
funds allowed.”*

SCRIPTURE:
Luke 14:25-33

I will never forget that embarrassing Friday afternoon. I went shopping with my cousin at our favorite busy supermarket. With our cart overflowing, we joined the long line of customers, taking what seemed like an eternity to reach the counter.

We got a rude shock when we discovered our goods cost more than our funds allowed. We ransacked our wallets, turned our pockets inside out, desperate to find money we'd overlooked. As our futile search continued, our embarrassment reached unimaginable levels. The impatient customers behind us began shuffling their feet. How we wished the ground would open and swallow us! We had no choice but to return some extras. When we left, my humiliated cousin declared, “I will always come shopping with a calculator to compute the cost of the stuff I buy to avoid this embarrassment!”

Counting the cost

Following Jesus wholeheartedly, acknowledging His Lordship, is what stewardship is all about. We must not only sit down and count the cost, but we must be willing to pay the price. Many of us begin the Christian journey with zeal but, like the five foolish virgins, lose momentum midway. We do not fully grasp the changes He wants to make within us.

Anything less than complete commitment disqualifies us from being faithful stewards. Ellen White underscores this fact when she makes the following statement: “God would be better pleased to have six thoroughly converted to the truth than to have sixty make a profession and yet not be truly converted” (*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 104).

What motivation?

Luke tells us that large crowds followed Jesus. However, Jesus was not really impressed by statistics. He seemed more interested with the quality rather than the quantity of His “professed” disciples. Jesus, who could read hearts, knew there were few genuine followers among the crowd. He knew many were actuated by base motives.

- Some believed Jesus was the long-awaited leader who would rescue them from the yoke of the Romans. These were motivated by political desire for earthly greatness.
- Others followed Him because they saw Him to be the solution for their selfish needs. To the sick, Jesus was a mobile clinic. To the hungry, He was a mobile bakery. Others saw Jesus as the Santa Claus of Christmas or the genie in Aladdin’s lamp, whose sole purpose was to cater to their wishes.
- Others were “secret agents” sent by jealous church leaders to spy on him. They were motivated by envy and misguided pride.
- The “Kingdom theology” of Jesus attracted many who were looking for a political base. Jesus was not the attraction, but merely the means to political ends.
- Others were dazzled by the spectacular. Jesus’ miracles were fascinating. The healings, the casting out of demons, the resurrections, were a wonder to behold! Many followed just to see Him exercise His tremendous power.
- Others were caught up in the euphoria of what was happening. They were suffering from the “everybody’s doing it” mentality. Jesus was the “in thing” and it was fashionable to follow Him.

But there were a few genuine followers who were hungry for His words of hope and the promise of a new life in Him. To this group, whenever Jesus spoke, their hearts were strangely warmed. The words of Peter captured their sentiments: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (Jn 8:68).

Lesser motivations

What motivates us to follow Jesus? What really attracts us? We need to answer with brutal honesty if we are to experience the wholeness that is found in God. Could any of the following be our motives for following?

- *Social Motivation.* Socializing with the large fraternity of church friends and catching up with the latest juicy gossip.
- *Cultural Motivation.* Being incorporated into the Judeo-Christian cultural system, with no personal conviction.
- *Familial Motivation.* “Following” Jesus, so as not to disappoint loved ones. More concerned with pleasing loved ones than the Lord.
- *Political Motivation.* Looking for a power base to operate from and “lording” it over others in the name of Jesus.
- *Emotional Motivation.* Coming to church to chase the “euphoria” and the emotions evoked in the worship service, mistaking an emotional high for closeness with Jesus.
- *Welfare Motivation.* Viewing the church as a welfare society. Preoccupied with what the church can do for you and not what you can do for God’s Church.

Qualifications for discipleship

In Luke 14:25-27, Jesus stipulates the price to be paid if we are to become His disciples. He begins with the following words: “If anyone comes after me...” Jesus defines real discipleship:

1 The potential disciple must hate his father, mother, wife, children, brothers, and sisters. Hate is a very strong word. However, according to Hebrew thought, the word means to “love less.” To Jesus, I only qualify to be His disciple if I make Him first in my heart.

The good news is that when I choose to make Him first, I receive from Him a new capacity to truly love others with His agape love. In this regard, Jesus sets us an example. When His mother and brothers came to look for Him, Jesus replied: “My mother and brothers are those who hear God’s word and put it into practice” (Lk 8:19-21). Jesus underscores that God and His word must be held closer to our hearts than our family ties.

2 The potential disciple must carry the cross. Jesus listed the second qualification for discipleship when he declared: “And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple” (v. 27). The challenge of carrying the cross is an unwelcomed message in this present age. Despite our frantic and sometimes desperate desire to circumvent the cross, Jesus is very direct: no one can be His disciple without carrying his cross. The cross is a symbol of death, and only a person who dies to self can follow Christ and be a true disciple. Therefore, everything we are and have must be consigned to the cross the altar of sacrifice. Paul discovered the secret of carrying his cross for he declared: “I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Ga 2:20).

For Paul, carrying the cross wasn’t easy. But the end result was worth it— to gain Christ. Like the farmer who sold everything he possessed to buy a field containing hidden treasure, Paul discovered the preciousness of following Jesus. He was willing to sacrifice everything for Christ. He was willing to pay the cost of discipleship. No wonder he declared, “But whatever was to my profit, I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.... I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him” (Php 3:7-9).

Counting the cost

Jesus challenges His potential disciples to count the cost of discipleship (Lk 14:28-33). What are some of these costs? Following Him may cost us friends. It may cost us our families or family members: Alex carries in his body the mark of the cost of following Jesus the loss of one of his eyes. He was nearly killed by his family for turning to Christ from another religion.

Following Jesus may cost us money. A disciple will give up unethical financial practices, return a faithful tithe and give generously to the cause of God and to those in need. Following Him may cost us our employment—the loss of work for refusing to work on Sabbath.

Following Christ will impact my life-style: my treatment of others, my use of time, the books I read, and the things I view and listen to. When I am following Jesus, there is one question I must always ask: “What would Jesus do?”

There is a cost to discipleship. But when we choose to follow and love Him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, we make the greatest discovery ever the blessings overwhelmingly exceed the cost!

The Ultimate Investment

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An unusual find

The biggest pearl in the world was owned by an archaeologist, Wilburn D. Cobb. It was found in a Philippine river by a Moslem tribal chief who named it the Pearl of Allah. He gave it to Cobb for curing his child of malaria. It is the size of a football, weighs fourteen pounds, and is valued at \$50 million. The present owner bought it from Cobb for \$200,000. This precious pearl will continue to change hands because, in the final analysis, it does not permanently belong to any body. It is a piece of property.

Jesus told a story about pearls and used it as a foil to describe the nature of the Christian experience (Mt 13:45-46). The story is about a merchant of fine pearls. In this short story, Jesus shares with us his understanding of human existence and the nature of discipleship.

Human potential for discipleship

It is common among Protestants to speak about the total depravity of human nature, meaning that, unaided by the power of God, humans are under the dominion of sin. Jesus chose to emphasize a positive aspect of human existence. According to him humans are merchants, implying by this that humans have assets, resources, and that to be alive is to be involved in a constant investment of that capital. They are day and night investing their lives, time, and their mental, physical, emotional and spiritual energies. They spend themselves and all they possess in the business of life. Human beings indeed have a capital, a God-given potential.

This business-like existence is nothing else than the expression of a deep and disturbing human uneasiness with respect to life. Humans, says Jesus, are by nature inquisitive, restless creatures, persistently searching, seeking. Since they are never totally satisfied with what they are and have, they spend their existence investing. It is true that this inquisitiveness has led to important scientific discoveries and great technological advances. But living in a state of dissatisfaction, in a constant search, in a frenetic investment of life, has created in humans a state of anxiety and fear. This existential condition can only be altered through the saving power of Christ. The human capital can be put in his service.

Human search and discipleship

In the parable, Jesus surprises us when he describes humans as investors seeking only what is good and valuable; they seek good pearls. There are false and cultivated pearls, and they all have some relative value. But the merchant is interested in buying “good” pearls. At the very core of the human heart there is a desire for the good and beautiful, for that which would enrich human beings and would make it possible for them to become what they were intended to be. It is true that in that search for the good and noble humans very often invest in what is evil and harvest wickedness. But at the same time this desire for the good, placed in the human heart by God, makes possible the success of the gospel and the possibility of developing disciples for the Lord.

The One who put in the human heart the longing and the search for the good, made available to us the good, the supreme good. The merchant found the unanticipated, what he did not know he was searching for. He thought he was seeking good pearls, but he was unconsciously hoping to find the Supreme Pearl, the Pearl

SCRIPTURE:
Matthew 13:45-46

At the very core of the human heart there is a desire for the good and beautiful, for that which would enrich human beings and would make it possible for them to become what they were intended to be.

of Great Value. Since the discovery was unexpected, one could almost say that the Pearl found him. He was captivated by the beauty of this previously un-imaginable Pearl. Had he been told about it, he would not have believed it; but there it was, right before him. This would be his last investment, because the Pearl would not devalue. On the contrary, it would increase in value and in value to the merchant. This is the heart of the parable: The uniqueness of the Pearl captivated the heart and mind of the merchant.

Humans as disciples

There was a criminal sentenced to life in prison. At first he dreamed about freedom and the possibility of leaving the prison. After forty years in jail, he was offered what he had anxiously waited for, freedom; but he rejected it. The prison had become his home. His last investment was a voluntary life in prison. This was not the case with the merchant in Christ's parable. He saw what he needed and decided to acquire it at any cost. Overwhelmed by the beauty and quality of the Pearl, he inquired about its cost. It was very costly.

The merchant examined his bank account, his cash flow, his investments in real estate, his retirement funds; he added everything he had and realized that in order to appropriate this Pearl he would have to give up all he had. He had to surrender it all! This is what discipleship is all about. People can join the church through baptism, but unless they surrender all to the Lord, the Great Pearl, they have not become His disciples.

This man "bought" the Pearl! He did not loan it or lease it in order to place it among his other pearls and display it for a few days. He owned this most wonderful Pearl. In the light of this Great Pearl all of his other pearls lost their luster and beauty, and he disposed of them. This was indeed his last investment; his capital had been well invested. His assets were now placed in the service of the Lord.

"A mere assent to the truth is not enough. There must be prayerful labor with those who embrace the truth, until they shall be convicted of their sins and shall seek God and be converted"—Review & Herald, December 12, 1878



The Missing Connection: Where Life Meets Lordship

*Reviewed by Claire L. Eva, Assistant Director
General Conference Stewardship Department*

Benjamin C. Maxson served as director of stewardship at the Seventh-day Adventist World Headquarters for over nine years. During those years Dr. Maxson contributed a regular column called “Concept” to the department’s resource journal, *Dynamic Steward*. This volume contains those articles, organized together in a meaningful way. An additional bonus is the great volume of topic-related quotations within the book.

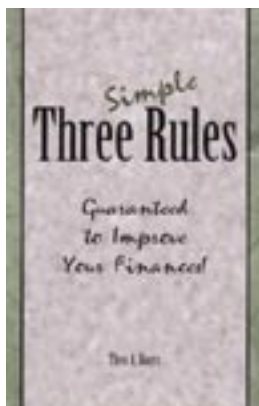
The chapters are presented in the following five parts: 1) Connected by Grace 2) Connected by Choice 3) Connected by Resources 4) The People Connection and 5) The Ministry Connection. Along with many spiritual insights, Dr. Maxson has a way of sharing practical pointers with the reader. A must read for inspiration and motivation to live a life of identity and partnership with Jesus Christ, and an excellent place to find the *Missing Connection: Where Life Meets Lordship*. (See the back-page ad for information on ordering.)



by Benjamin C. Maxson
Stewardship Department
General Conference of SDA
Silver Spring, Maryland
2005 US \$6.99

Three Simple Rules

*Reviewed by Claire L. Eva, Assistant Director
General Conference Stewardship Department*



by Theo A. Boers
Micah Institute
Grand Rapids, Michigan
2003 US \$5.00

The book, *Three Simple Rules: Guaranteed to Improve Your Finances*, is a small volume especially written with young people or couples in mind. It is practical and easy to follow based on the financial counseling ministry of businessman and entrepreneur, Theo A. Boers. The book is the result of Mr. Boers’ counseling hundreds of families and training many financial counselors in his home church.

The volume begins with an authentic case history of the financial life of a young couple Steve and Jessica. Readers will immediately see just how this couple began the downward spiral into financial debt. But Boers does not leave the reader with the problem or a list of solutions alone. He lays out the three simple rules of finance and uses this case history to apply these rules. He helps us to see how Jessica and Steve turned around their financial lives and became financially free.

The Financial Counselor and Workshop Training Manual is also available and is a self-teaching course on 1) how to become a financial counselor 2) how to do pre-marriage financial mentoring and 3) how to conduct small group financial workshops. It contains step-by-step instructions and forms, five case studies and case study answers all easy to understand.

The book can be downloaded for *free* from the website: threerules.org or purchased for \$5.00 (shipping included within U.S!). Both book and manual can be purchased for \$35 or the manual and 15 books can be purchased for \$95. Check their specials at the website.

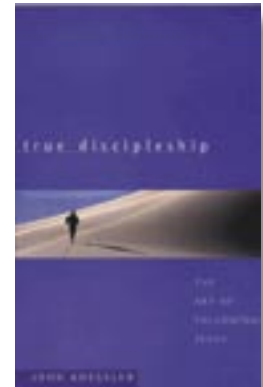
True Discipleship: The Art of Following Jesus

*Reviewed by Jean-Luc Lézeau, Acting Director
General Conference Stewardship Department*

When you run a topical search on the subject of discipleship at Amazon.com, you will come up with at least 2243 hits! The findings are not all related to biblical discipleship, but the site reveals a wealth of material that is available today on the subject. Whether this is a recent trend or not, the fact is, there is much renewed interest and focus on Jesus' last command: "Make disciples."

Among the many authors on discipleship, Koessler presents "The art of following Jesus," the subtitle of his book, very closely to what we have tried to present in our stewardship seminar on the topic. Discipleship, like stewardship, is a lifestyle. It is not primarily about what we do; it is an outgrowth of what or who we are.

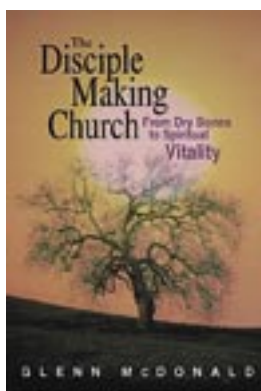
Disciple making, says Koessler, is not a matter of programs but of people. It still takes a disciple to make a disciple. And that may be the challenge we are faced with. Do we have enough disciples to grow more disciples? An excellent book for those interested in authentic Christian living. Companion guide also available.



by John Koessler
Moody Publishers
Chicago, Illinois
2003 US \$12.99

The Disciple Making Church

*Reviewed by Jean-Luc Lézeau, Acting Director
General Conference Stewardship Department*



by Glenn McDonald
FaithWalk Publishing
Grand Haven, Michigan
2004 US \$14.99

When he was asked a pointed question at the close of a monthly church board meeting, Glenn McDonald realized that his church didn't have a comprehensive strategy for transforming men, women, and children into lifelong learners of Jesus Christ. Not being able to answer that question immediately led him to a profound transformation in the way he was pastoring his church.

What makes this book interesting is that the author talks about his own experience. Many pastors and church leaders should make the same journey. We must first realize that most Christian churches tend to define success by the number of people who have made a decision. But does being part of a "number" give us sure access to the Kingdom?

"American culture" McDonald says, "has unapologetically absolutized that is, made more important than anything else possessions, pleasures and power." What is frightening is that, for better or for worse, each of us is somebody's disciple.

McDonald explores the discipleship process in two ways. 1) He looks at six discipleship relationships from the perspective of the Apostle Paul: Who is your Lord? Who are you? Who is Barnabas? Who is Timothy? Where is your Antioch? Where is your Macedonia? 2) And then, the six marks of a disciple: A heart for Christ alone, A mind transformed by the Word, arms of love, knees for prayer, a voice to speak the Good News, a spirit of servanthood and stewardship. This book has had a lasting impact on many readers. It could have the same effect on you!

NEW RELEASE

Have you ever felt a gap between your life and the reality of knowing Jesus Christ as Lord?

Do you ever fear God saying to you, “I never knew you”?

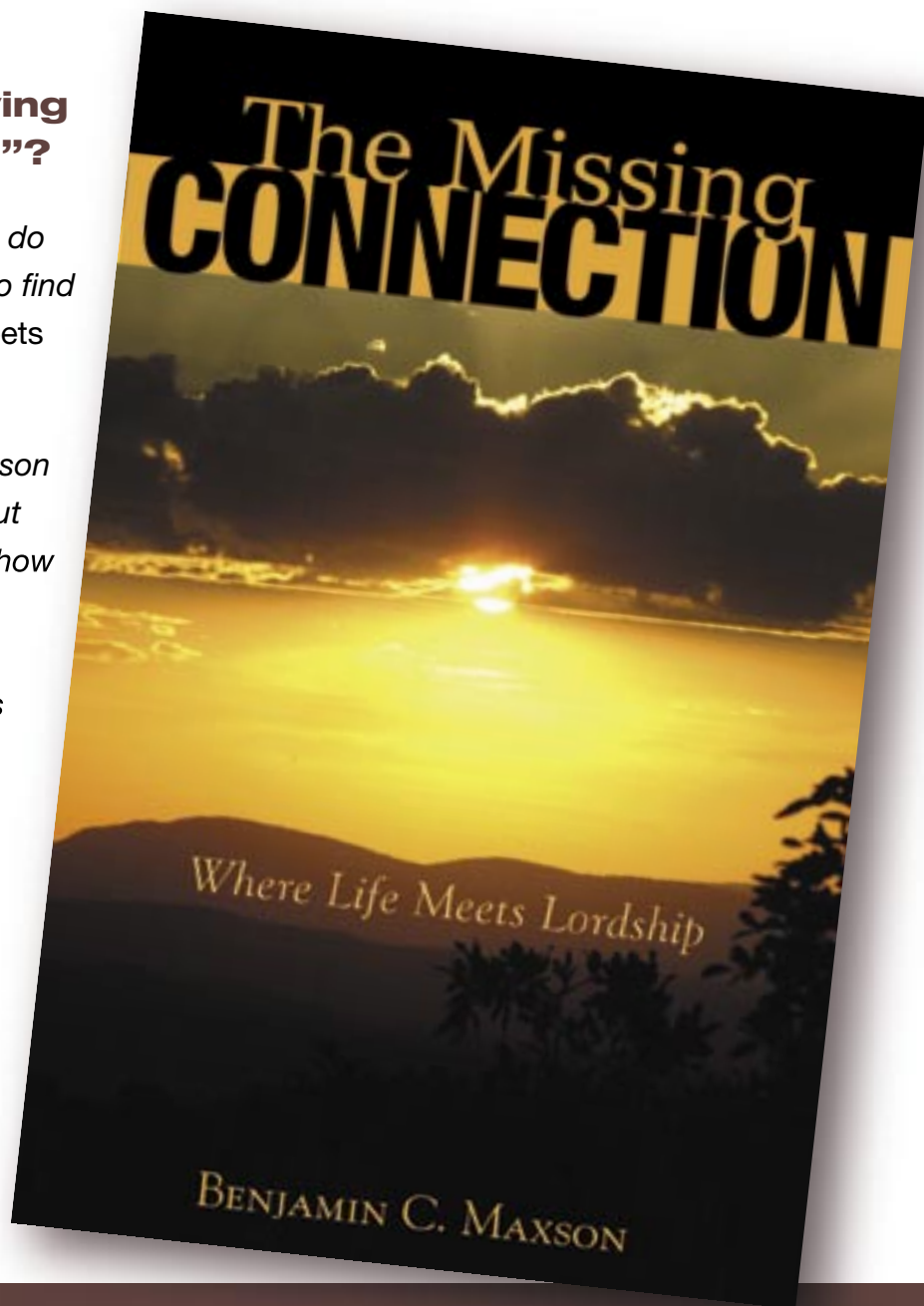
Jesus said it is possible for Christians to do many good things in His name, but fail to find The Missing Connection: Where Life Meets Lordship.

Author, lecturer and pastor, Dr. Ben Maxson experienced that missing connection. But



God led him to discover how the gap could be closed. How he could internalize and realize what it means to follow Christ as Lord.

In The Missing Connection: Where Life Meets Lordship the author shares years of study and exciting discovery about what it means to know Jesus Christ as Partner and Lord. This book will help you find The Missing Connection. It's time to close the gap!



To order this new, exciting and inspirational book, contact Johnetta Barmadia at barmadiaj@gc.adventist.org or call 301-680-6157

The book is also available through AdventSource. only \$6.99 USD

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