

DYNAMIC

Steward

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

October-December, 2006

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Volume 10 Number 4



Servant or Friend or Both?



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

Instead of servants

Does Jesus consider us servants or friends? The writers of the New Testament have said it countless times and in a variety of ways—we are Christ’s servants. We dream of Jesus affirming us with His words, “Well done, good and faithful servant” (Mt 25:21). And we embrace our role as servant when we reflect on Jesus’ words, “Whenever you did one of these things to someone overlooked or ignored, that was me—you did it to me” (Mt 25:40, *Message*). Scripture unquestionably upholds the reality that we are His servants.

But there is one passage that “trips me up” on the question of friend or servant, and it is found in John 15. There, Jesus says, “You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you” (Jn 15:14-15).

In these words, Jesus is declaring a friendship and close partnership that He has not uttered up to this time. He continues, speaking in the most intimate language—“Remain in me, and I will remain in you—If you remain in me *you will* bear much fruit—You are my friends if you do what I tell you—Remain in my love!” (Jn 15)

An “inside job”

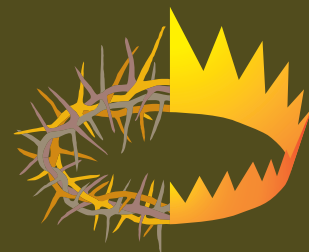
If we have learned anything from Jesus, we know that His service was an “inside job.” We cannot “put on” true servanthood; it must come from the heart. Christ abhorred anything cosmetic—“man looks on the outside, but God looks at the heart.” He lived His declaration, “I have not come to be served, but to serve” (Mt 20:28). And as His friends, He asks us to join Him in that life. “Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends” (Jn 15:13).

A friend is willing to serve because of the love Jesus has placed in his heart. Friend or servant or both? We serve with Christ and for Him. Through Him, we serve as He served. And because He has taken us into His confidence and told us everything the Father revealed to Him, He asks us to serve, not merely as a servant, but as His friend.

A word to our readers

Dear friends, I must take a moment to tell you, this is my last editorial as editor of *Dynamic Steward*. I have been challenged with a chronic illness and need to lessen my responsibilities. I will miss my work with the journal and sharing with you. Because He is in us, may we serve Him from this moment on, in greater ways than we could ever imagine. This is my prayer and dream for us all.

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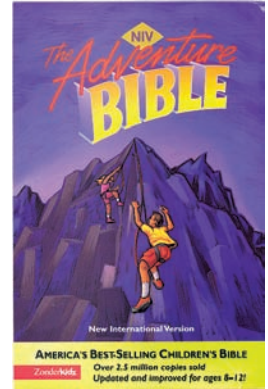
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The NIV Adventure Bible

The *NIV Adventure Bible* for children ages 8-12, is filled with great adventures and exciting new features. Some of the new in-text features are—

- Life in Bible Times helps children understand what it was like to live in Bible times. Colorful new pictures are in each box.
- People in Bible Times helps readers sort out Zechariah from Zephaniah, Jehoshaphat from Joash.
- Words to Treasure highlights popular verses to memorize.
- Did You Know? points out many of the interesting facts and figures found in the Bible.
- Let's Live It! suggests activities, such as playing games and drawing pictures to reinforce the Bible lessons.

Also included are Book Introductions for basic facts about each Bible book, designed to spark curiosity and help pre-teens establish a relationship with God and His Word.



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“We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give.”—Winston Churchill

quotes

Service ...

There is more happiness in giving than in receiving—*Acts 20:35*

Our deeds determine us, as much as we determine our deeds.—*George Eliot*

Do something for somebody every day for which you do not get paid.—*Albert Schweitzer*

To do more for the world than the world does for you—that is success.—*Henry Ford*

We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give.—*Winston Churchill*

In helping others, we shall help ourselves, for whatever good we give out completes the circle and comes back to us.—*Flora Edwards*

We are prone to judge success by the index of our salaries or the size of our automobile rather than by the quality of our service and relationship to humanity.—*Martin Luther King, Jr.*

It is one of the most beautiful compensations of life that no man can sincerely try to help another without helping himself.—*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

Some people choose not to donate their services because they believe that it somehow devalues them by “giving them away.” In truth, there is nothing that demonstrates the value of your skills more than putting them to good use for a cause you believe in.—*Scott Allen*



“To Serve or Not to Serve”

*Erika F. Puni, Director
General Conference Stewardship*



But to be sure the disciples now understand His purpose and mission in the world, Jesus illustrates the point with His own life.



Good morning, Sir. This is a courtesy call from your Ford dealer, checking to see if you are happy with the car service you received from us a couple of days ago?” Indeed, I was happy and impressed to hear from my local dealer, knowing that they care about me—the customer. In a hotel where we stayed recently, there was no microwave to sterilize Janae-Grace’s bottles and no electric kettle for her hot water, but room service was willing to deliver us boiled water daily, for a fee. The hotel support staff was definitely willing to help, but it cost three dollars to deliver hot water to our room!

In Australia, where we had lived for some time, and in our new country of residence, the United States of America, I am encouraged to learn of the growing number of individuals and organizations that are involved in local and international volunteering—a special kind of service commitment. As followers of Jesus in 2006, I wonder if we would be willing to serve Him in the refugee camps of Darfur (Sudan), in the crime infested favelas (slums) of Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), or in the under-served areas of New Orleans. This is the question.

Serving, bottom up

As humans with carnal natures, the disciples of Jesus did not understand, nor did they comprehend, the centrality of “service” to the kingdom or rule of God. Their thoughts and attitudes were influenced by the secular agenda of their time—position, self, and the desire to be served by others. And when the issue of leadership surfaced within the circle of the twelve, Jesus had to confront this selfish craving for the “number one” position by saying:

“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mt 20:25-28).

For Jesus, His kingdom’s manifesto is service, and this emphasis is contrary to the philosophical position of the world. On this occasion, Christ made it explicitly clear that for anyone to be part of His community—His people—they must live by this service principle. But the test of discipleship is not simple, because it calls for the emptying of self and for one to take on the role of a slave, a position that society accepts as lower than a hired servant. Slaves have no legal rights; no special privileges, no defense when abused by their masters, and no future but to work and serve at the mercy of their owners. But to be sure the disciples now understand His purpose and mission in the world, Jesus illustrates the point with His own life. “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve.”

With basin and towel

It was the celebration of Passover and their last supper together before the cross, and Jesus wanted to spend this time alone with His disciples (Jn 13). But the place for this evening meal did not belong to anyone in the group, so there was no host and, consequently, there were no servants or slaves around to do the menial task of washing the guests’ feet before entering and eating. Given the uniqueness of the situation, who should be serving in this incidence? Culturally, it cannot be Jesus. He is the master and leader and He holds the place of respect among the group. But no one offers, and not one of the twelve is willing to initiate the custom of foot washing.

Again, Jesus, Lord of the universe, has to demonstrate once more that living under the rule of God means serving even as a servant. But there is more to serving! For Jesus, service is a mark of true discipleship (Jn 13:14, 15). Furthermore, the person who serves with the basin and towel will be blessed by God (Jn 13:17).

A serving attitude

Service as an outward behavior—what is seen by people—is an expression of an attitude of mind and heart. The apostle Paul makes this point when writing to the Galatian Christians: “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross!” (Php 2:5-8).

Christ substitutionary death was the ultimate example of service and sacrifice. But while human service is a manifestation of the stewardship of Christian discipleship, such an act of love must spring forth from a heart that is connected to the heart of God Himself. In this way, our service is an extension of Christ’s life of service in us and through us. It is not motivated by false humility or prompted by the promise of rewards and personal gains, but a genuine outcome of a life that is ruled by Christ. Service is a Christian lifestyle, an authentic sign of being a disciple of Jesus in the twenty-first century. And so, when our relationship with God is right, then the question about service is no longer “whether to serve or not to serve” but “where and when can I serve?”

The Church— A serving community

As members of the body of Christ on earth, where do we start? Let me make a suggestion. I believe that, as Christians, we are called to make a difference for God in the world, but we are to start with our families and friends—those that are near to us and whom we meet regularly. Service is not necessarily a matter of going to far-away places, nor is it determined by how much we give in terms of our resources and time, but rather, it is our willingness to make life better for someone in need today.

stewardship window

news from the
director’s desk ...



Stewardship Advisories, Now and Then!

During 2006, our General Conference team has participated in Division Stewardship Advisories in IAD, SPD, SSD, and NSD. The one common element that we have found coming through very strongly is a commitment by our directors, both at Division and Union levels, to holistic biblical stewardship education that focuses on God and a dynamic relationship with Him!

There is also the consensus by our team in these areas to support and be involved with the “Tell the World” initiative of the General Conference. On the

other hand, each Division is developing contextualized resources for its fields, and we affirm them for their initiatives in resource development. IAD is an example, with its series of PowerPoint presentations and seminar on *Counsels on Stewardship* that, of course, we have shared with the rest of the world field.

The General Conference Stewardship team looks forward to participating in the upcoming 2007 Division Advisories to be held in NAD, TED, EUD, SID, and WAD.

Service: Discipline of the Disciple

*David VanDenBurgh, Senior Pastor
Kettering SDA Church
Kettering, Ohio*



This abridged sermon is part of the excellent series by Dr. VanDenBurgh, "Following Hard After Jesus."

Following Jesus means living like and being like Him. Jesus' first disciples took this very literally. They literally traveled with, lived with, and were taught by Him. They imitated what they saw Jesus doing, working with Him and sharing in His ministry. They obeyed Him and wanted to be like Him. Being Christ's disciple does not mean anything different today than it meant then. It is exactly the same.

Jesus had a tremendous sense of mission. He said, "I came not to be served, but to serve. The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mk 10:45). Jesus was not in doubt about what He had come to earth to do. He did not come to please Himself, but to serve by seeking and saving lost people. He did not spend His life working for retirement. It would be hard to imagine Him spending time doing many of the things the average person does. I cannot imagine Jesus, for example, being a "couch potato" sitting in front of the television. He had more important things to do with His life.

Jesus' sense of urgency and purpose for His life was so vital; there was no time to waste. He was not even concerned to make a living. He knew God would take care of Him, so that He could concentrate on fulfilling His mission.

Because Jesus lived as He did, His own family thought He was crazy. They could not understand why He did not behave like his brothers. Why He did not settle down and get a job, take a wife, and raise a family. At one point, they came looking for Him to take Him home, forcefully if necessary, saying that He was beside Himself. Jesus clearly marched to the beat of a different drummer. Even His mother did not understand it.

Nobody else but you

Do you have a sense of calling in your life? Do you know why God made you the person you are? What is your mission in the world—that one thing you need to do that nobody else can do? This thing named a "call" is often mysterious. People speak of being called to the ministry or say, "God called me to go here or to go there." What do we mean by this? I want to suggest that every Christian has a calling—that God calls each of us to occupy a certain place in the world, to carry out a certain ministry, and to fulfill a certain purpose. If you really want a meaningful and abundant life in Christ, if you really want to be the person He has made you to be, you need to know what He has called you to do, what your purpose and ministry is all about.

How do you find this out? Intuitively, each of us knows we are here for something more than going to school, working for forty years at a career that is more or less satisfying, then retiring only to complain about the arthritis and bunions of old age—and then dying. There has to be more, and we know it!

I have known people who were successful in their careers and admired by others, yet were deeply disappointed near the end of their lives. Though at the top of their professions during their working lives, they ended their days wondering if what they had done was really worth it after all! As they lay dying, their sense of futility would come out and people who knew them when they were young and powerful would wonder if this was the same person they had admired and respected, who seemed so sure of himself all those years?

We do not have to do great things in our lives, but we do need to believe that we are doing what God created for us to do. Otherwise, we feel disappointed and useless, no matter what other people say about us. We all need to hear God's call, to know why He made us and to believe that we have found the work He designed for us.

SCRIPTURE:
Mark 10:45

We do not have to do great things in our lives, but we do need to believe that we are doing what God created for us to do. Otherwise, we feel disappointed and useless, no matter what other people say about us.

One of the disciplines

This is what we mean when we talk about our mission and our destiny. This is our ministry and service to God. This service is one of the *disciplines* of the disciple. There are those who do not want to do the service we are talking about. They prefer to be served. They are first in line for positions of power and influence, to tell other people what to do. They love to sit on boards and make decisions, but they do not like to get their hands dirty serving, and they do not understand how to make disciples or why it is necessary. This is not the service Jesus talks about. To be Jesus' disciple you must do the ministry God called you to do.

This ministry does not have to be the ordained ministry. Christians can serve God just as well outside the ranks of professional clergy as anyone can inside it. I know that when someone asks, "Who is the minister of that church?" they want to know who the pastor is. But there is something wrong with that question. It does not acknowledge that every member of the Church is a minister for Christ, because every person has been called to ministry. Jesus says, "Follow me." He gives every believer an assignment. If we want to be Christ's disciples, we must commit to that.

An example of service

How can you discover your calling if you don't know what it is? This is where the various disciplines of the disciple come into play: the discipline of the Word, the discipline of prayer, the discipline of stewardship, the discipline of community. Today we are talking about the discipline of service. It is through the practice of these disciplines, especially the first four, that we come to understand what God has called us to in the fifth one. If you faithfully spend time listening to the Word of God, spend time in conversation with Him, and you carefully consider how to be a good steward of that which is given to you—knowing it does not belong to you, but to Jesus—if you are in community with honest, truth-telling fellow disciples, then you are right where you need to be to discern God's calling for your life. We should be looking each minute of every day for opportunities to serve Jesus by serving others. We should be constantly reminded that, like the Lord, we are not here to be served but to serve. Like Him, we are to spend our lives serving others.

Mother Theresa insisted on cleaning toilets every day. She chose to be a servant and she wanted to remember what it means to serve. So, even after she received the Nobel Prize, she still cleaned toilets. You would think that the work she committed her life to—serving the poorest of the poor in the name of Jesus— would have been servanthood enough. But she felt she needed to set an example of service and be constantly reminded that Jesus became a servant to all people.

Jesus astonished His disciples by washing their feet. There are characteristics of the follower of Jesus we would rather forget, like obedience, humility, and service. But these are the very qualities Jesus urged on His disciples. He said, "If anyone

would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all" (Mk 9:35). In Mark 10:43-44 Jesus says, "I know how it is among the great people of the world.... They lord it over others and expect to be served. But it shall not be so among you." "Instead," He says, "Whoever would be great among you must be your servant and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all." So easy to say and so hard to do—to actually live by the mindset that I am a servant to every person I meet!

I once heard someone say, "Every time I meet somebody I say to myself, 'How can I add value to that person's life? What can I say to help the person experience more fully the value that God has placed upon him or her?'" There is a great mindset! I have tried to remember this as I meet people and think not about myself and what they are thinking of me, but how I can build into their lives something that will add value; it is a kind of servanthood.

Columba and the Picts

In the seventh century, the Irish Christian Columba wanted to evangelize the pagan Celts and Picts of Scotland. He had an interesting method for doing it. He established a community on an island off the coast of Scotland and gather people together who wanted to be missionaries. Each had to have some skill, such as being an iron or leather worker or knowing how to write or bake bread. Skills that were in need and preferably skills the people of the mainland did not already have. Then, when they were ready, they would take a boat from the island to the mainland and would move into a community, but would not say a word about being missionaries. As part of the community they would begin to add value to it by making iron tools, by teaching people to read and write, or by providing some service the community needed. Ministering to and

Service: A Discipline ..., con't

servicing the people, they would win their confidence and the right to have a conversation with them about their belief in God—sharing the gospel story of Jesus. That was how Columba and his mission evangelized Scotland. Years later, when England had lost the gospel and was again overrun by paganism, it was Scotland and Ireland that actually re-evangelized the English. It was so successful it might be a good model, even today.

When we serve people, we earn the right to have a conversation with them about spiritual things. It is a great way of being a missionary and is exactly what Jesus modeled for us and called us to do. Suppose we had a similar way of thinking. Suppose we thought of our jobs, our participation in sports, our attendance in school, our residence in our neighborhood, as a way of mingling and serving and gaining a hearing for Jesus? It is not a job, it is not a career, it is not life—it is ministry! Jesus says, he who would save his life (meaning he who would guard or protect it), he who would try to increase it, will lose it. But “he who loses his life for my sake [and for the gospel’s sake], will save it” (Mk 8:35).

This suggests that the more I give of myself in serving others, the more my life increases. And the more I think about myself and my wants and pleasures, the more my life diminishes. James says “be doers of the Word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves” (Jm 1:21). We do not need a longer list of things to do. We want to *be* doers. It is self-destructive to focus on what you know. You must focus on what God has called you to do.

Here are some questions to help you know what God wants for you. First, do you know what God has called you to do? Have you heard His call? Second, do you know what ministry God has assigned to you? Third, how

much time are you giving to ministry? This gets a bit difficult to sort out. Ask yourself the question, “What would I do if I didn’t *have* to do anything?” If you won the lottery, for example, would you keep your job? If the answer is no, then you are probably just doing your job because you need to, rather than as a means of ministry. How much time each week are you spending on ministry? I do not mean if you are a factory worker that you put in a full day’s work. How much time each week are you *actually* engaged in the ministry of serving?

Tithing time?

The next question is, how much time are you willing to set aside for ministry? Suppose you were to create a ministry allocation as you give tithe. What would happen if we tithed our time? If we said, “Here is a piece of time that I am going to set aside specifically for ministry.” Again, this gets tricky because much of the very best kind of ministry takes place in the context of living. It is not something we go out to do; it is something we *do as we go*. If we are not intentional, we can find ourselves just living life—earning a living, coming home, going to bed, getting up, and doing it all over again—without any conscious thought that we are serving and ministering by doing this. And we probably are not. We are just living.

Service starts in your mind. I found this in Rick Warren’s book, *The Purpose Driven Life*. Warren does so well in talking about living life with purpose. He ably develops the idea of servanthood and what it means. Let’s go over some statements he makes: Servants think more about others than about themselves. Servants do not wake up in the morning and say “I wonder what I will do today?” Servants wake up in the morning thinking, “I wonder what the Master has for me to do today?” Servants spend most of their time and energy thinking about serving, about what other people are asking of them, what it means to be a servant.

A figure, a fire, and fish

Characteristic of Jesus, Paul says “He emptied himself” (Php 2: 7). He gave up all thoughts of Himself—what He could get or what He wanted—in order to serve, because that is who He was. God is a servant! The next point states: Servants think like stewards, not owners. Servants do not own anything. They have things entrusted to them that they can use wisely for the sake of their Master. Jesus says no one can serve two masters (Lk 16:13). You cannot serve both God and money. If my life is controlled by the need to make money or to build up my retirement account, then I immediately have a conflict. If Jesus is right, and no one can serve both God and money, then every Christian trying to live anywhere in a society like ours that revolves so much around money, has a real challenge on his or her hands.

What does it mean to live in our society and to *not* serve money—to not worry about money and how to pay the bills, how to save enough for retirement and provide for the children’s education? What does it mean to serve Christ instead of serving money? The answer seems to be in the area of stewardship. When we understand that we are not owners of anything but simply stewards using what God has entrusted to us for purposes He has in mind, then it makes it easier to understand.

Thirdly, servants think about their work, not about what others are doing. One of the great stories that illustrates this comes at the end of John’s gospel. It is after Jesus’ resurrection and Peter says, “I am going fishing.” And the other disciples say, “We will come with you.” As they go down to the lake, dawn begins to break, and



*“It is self-destructive to focus on what you know.
You must focus on what God has called you to do.”*

they see a figure on the shore and a little fire burning there. The figure on the shore says to them, “Got any fish?” That was an interesting remark! Eventually they realize it is the Lord. Peter jumps in the water and swims ashore. Jesus has a fire going—charcoal and fish—and He serves them breakfast.

After breakfast, Jesus asks Peter, “Peter, do you love me?” Peter replies, “Lord you know that I do! Jesus asks him the same question three times and each time Peter answers, “Lord, you know that I love you!” Jesus is putting Peter back together again after his failure and betrayal. Jesus is reinstating Peter to his office. It must have felt good for Peter to know that he and Jesus were all right, that they still had a relationship and that there was still something there for him to do.

Forget what he is doing!

Right after that, Jesus sets off down the beach. He and Peter walk and talk. Then Peter turns around to see John following them at a distance, and Peter says to Jesus, “Lord, what about this man?” And Jesus says to Peter, “Do not worry about him; that has nothing to do with you. You just follow me.”

Isn’t that interesting? This account is a paradigm—something more than just a report of a casual conversation. What Jesus is telling us is that following Him is a highly individualized thing! Following Christ, being His disciple, is all about how *you* relate to Him. It has nothing to do with how *other* people relate to Jesus, for other people may be able to go places and do things that Jesus will not let you do.

Others may be able to shirk responsibilities that you cannot shirk. You may find yourself saying, “It is not fair! I do not understand why he can do this and I cannot.” And Jesus would probably say to you exactly what he said to Peter, “What is that to you? You just follow me.” Servants do not worry about what other people are doing. They simply focus on what they are supposed to do. In Romans 14:4 there is an interesting statement. “Who are you to criticize someone else’s servant? The Lord will determine whether his servant has been successful.” When I was a new Christian, I was very concerned about what others were doing. I have discovered that my concern is enough, if I focus on myself and how I am serving the Lord.

The next point: Servants base their identity in Christ. The only approval that counts is the Lord’s approval (2Cor 10:18). I have come to realize that much of what I do, I do for the sake of others’ approval, and I am actively trying to get unhooked from my need for this. The only thing that matters to me is what Jesus has to say. The only approval that counts is His approval. It does not matter whether others think I am a good guy or a capable person or a good pastor. The only thing that matters is what Jesus thinks. This is true for servanthood.

One more for Jesus

Lastly, servants think of ministry as an opportunity, not an obligation. Psalm 100:2 says, “Serve the Lord with gladness.” Warren tells a story about his father in his section on servanthood in *Purpose Drive Life*. He says, “My father was a minister for over fifty years, serving mostly in small rural churches. He was a simple preacher, but he was a man with a mission. His favorite activity was taking teams of volunteers overseas to build churches for small congregations. In his lifetime, Dad built over 150 churches around the world. In 1999 my father died of cancer. In the final week of his life, the disease kept him awake in a semiconscious state for nearly twenty-four hours a day. As he dreamed, he would talk out loud about what he was dreaming.

“Sitting by his bedside, I learned a lot about my dad by just listening to his dreams. He relived one church building project after another. One night near the end while my wife, my niece, and I were by his side, Dad suddenly became very active and tried to get out of bed. Of course, he was too weak and my wife insisted he lay back down. But he persisted in trying to get out of bed. So, my wife finally asked, ‘Jimmy, what are you trying to do?’ He replied, ‘Got to save one more for Jesus, got to save one more for Jesus, got to save one more for Jesus.’”

“He began to repeat that phrase over and over. During the next hour he said the phrase probably one hundred times, ‘Got to save one more for Jesus.’ As I sat by his bed with tears flowing down my cheeks, I bowed my head to thank God for my dad’s faith. At that moment, Dad reached out and placed his frail hand on my head and said, as if commissioning me, ‘Save one more for Jesus, save one more for Jesus, save one more for Jesus.’”

Conclusion

I intend to do that. I intend for that to be the theme of the rest of my life. I invite you to consider it as a focus for your life too, because nothing will make a greater difference for eternity. If you want to be used by God; you must care about what God cares about. What He cares about most is the redemption of the people He made. He wants His lost children found. *Nothing matters more to God*, the cross proves that. I pray that you will always be on the lookout to reach one more for Jesus, so when you stand before God, you can say, “Mission accomplished.” That is a purpose, a call, a ministry, and a focus! And that gives real meaning to everything that we do in our lives.

Fishing without Hooks

*Stephen Chavez, Managing Editor
Adventist Review/Adventist World*



Bottom line

Bottom line: We worship the bottom line. What is in it for us? What is the payback, the return on investment? Those who work in development and mass marketing have formulas for each kind of program they propose. In some direct-mail campaigns the industry standard is about a one percent return. In other words, if you send out 10,000 pieces of mail, you can expect about 100 responses.

Experienced public evangelists know that a certain amount spent on advertising will bring a certain number of people to their opening night's meeting. And of those, a certain percentage will give their hearts to Jesus and join the Church.

It is part of being good stewards. Didn't Jesus say, "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it?" (Lk 14: 28). But in His teachings and actions, Jesus also put a premium on doing the right thing, not because it "fed the bottom line," but because it was the right thing to do.

In the parable of the lost sheep, the shepherd leaves ninety-nine sheep in the open country, risking their lives for the sake of the one sheep that is lost (Lk 15:4-7). The parable of the Good Samaritan has the Samaritan risking his life and spending his own money on a Jew who almost certainly would not have reciprocated if their situations were reversed (Lk 10:25-37).

Predicting His approaching death, Jesus said, "Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour?' No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour" (Jn 12:27). Then He said, "But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself" (verse 32).

Jesus knew that many of the people He came to save would end up rejecting Him. Still He had to fulfill the reason He came to this planet. He said: "The Son the Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mt 20:28).

Faithful in service

Unselfish service is one of the hallmarks of genuine Christianity. We often think of missionaries who leave lives of ease to go with their families to some foreign country and live in humble, even dangerous, settings. They do this to live God's love and tell people about the life, death, and soon return of Jesus. Often they work for years without seeing any tangible results.

Then there are doctors and nurses who serve tiny communities that have few, if any, modern healthcare facilities. In metropolitan areas they could earn many times the amount they make in these small communities, but God has called them to serve Him—by serving others—in these modest settings. No one would suggest they are wasting their time in their hard work, even if people do not join the Church as a result.

Acts of service are not just for dedicated pastors, missionaries, and medical professionals. All of us have been commissioned by Christ to reflect His Spirit of compassionate service: "You are the light of the world," He says. "A city on a hill cannot be hidden Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (Mt 5:14, 16). How do people in our communities know that God loves them?

SCRIPTURE:
Matthew 20:28

In His teachings and actions, Jesus also put a premium on doing the right thing, not because it “fed the bottom line,” but because it was the right thing to do.

Love in action

Perhaps we have been conditioned to believe that the Gospel commission is accomplished primarily by proclamation; that it is just a matter of telling people what they ought to know. But is it possible that we can reflect God’s love to people without ever opening a Bible or inviting them to an evangelistic series?

So much can be accomplished by those of us with modest talents, if our primary goal is to reflect God’s love to the people in our communities—without any strings attached. We could volunteer at one of several community centers—a hospital, a library, a school, or a recreation center. We could deliver “meals on wheels,” read to the blind, visit shut-ins, do grocery shopping for someone who cannot get out, take the elderly to medical appointments, and more.

We might be part of some community activity like maintaining parks and hiking trails, picking up trash along streams, lakes, and rivers. We could teach smokers how to stop smoking, teach immigrants how to speak the language of their new country, or teach adults how to read.

We could join a community ensemble, such as a band or choir. We could help coach underprivileged youth in soccer, swimming, or some other sport. Of course, there is always the possibility that one or more of these activities will lead someone to ask about our faith, and eventually for Bible studies. But even if they do not, we are still reflecting God’s love to our community.

Blessed to be a blessing

The blessings that come from involvement in these types of activities are invaluable. For us, the benefit is being able to develop relationships with people we would otherwise never meet. We are able to sympathize with them and understand that we all share the same needs—the need to be loved, to belong, and to feel secure; all directly addressed by having a relationship with God.

Those we serve will benefit to see how the principle of supreme love for God and others is lived out in the lives of His people. In some communities, Adventists are looked upon with suspicion. This is because we are not known. But the more people see us in positive, proactive, non-threatening situations, the more they see God’s love reflected in us, and the more they will understand God and appreciate His character.

As far as we know, Jesus never told His disciples, “I am going to be feeding 5,000 men here today, along with women and children. Be sure they sign decision cards before they get any fish.” He never said, “Before I heal you, I just need you to sign this Bible study request card.”

Jesus was the greatest example of love in action. Part of His effectiveness was His willingness to spread God’s love indiscriminately to Jew and Gentile, saint and sinner. And He said, “I am among you as one who serves” (Lk 22:27).



Dot or Line?

Kigundu Ndwiga
Stewardship Director
East Central Africa Division



“My awakening began one June morning in 2004!”

Life's brevity

The brevity of life has dawned upon me. My awakening began one June morning in 2004. My wife called, shattering my peaceful morning with the depressing news of the sudden death of my best friend, confidant, and mentor. Julius died in a traffic accident. He was only forty-five. It had only been one year since he finished the long path to his PhD in New Testament theology. He died one week before the graduation of his first class of students. Moses was right. Our days “quickly pass and we fly away.”

Then my brother-in-law, Charles—a yuppie, rapidly climbing the corporate ladder, amassing wealth and seeking political office—was diagnosed with colon cancer and his priorities suddenly changed. During the last year and a half of his life, while enduring energy sapping chemotherapy, Charles spent his time pursuing Christ and sharing His reality with others. Like Julius, he also was forty-five.

Solomon challenges us to remember our Creator when we are young by surrendering to His lordship. The heroic decision to integrate the lordship of Christ into our lives and service must not be put off. Jesus underscores the importance of serving God during the day, before dusk: “As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work” (Jn 9:4).

We are like the fading flowers of the field—like a candle in the wind whose flame can be snuffed out at any moment. Even if we were to live “long” like my grandma whom we buried recently at age one-hundred fifteen, we must ask ourselves; “What are one-hundred fifteen years compared to eternity?” As someone aptly put it, “*Our life is a small dot, while eternity is a long, continuous line.*” He then posed a thought-provoking question: “Are we living for the dot or for the line?”

Living for the line

Living for the line means living in such a way that the eternal perspective is brought to bear on every aspect of life. Our lives are not measured by quantity, but by quality—the blessed richness of life. Jesus only lived thirty-three years on earth, but that brief life has affected the destiny of billions, changed history, and impacted eternity. It is for this reason He declares, “I have come that they may have life and have it to the full (Jn 10:10).” We rejoice as we enjoy the overflow of the richness of that life. Indeed, *Jesus lived for the line.*

In His footsteps

We must live for the line like Jesus, if our lives are to overflow and bless others, we must follow in His footsteps. For becoming like Him is our goal.

1 *Footstep One: Be filled and learn to walk in the Spirit.* Jesus’ words echo this truth: “Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him. By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive....” (Jn 7:38, 39). Only a full life can overflow in blessing to others.

2 *Footstep Two: Receive the Spirit’s vision of your special area of service.* Each of us is unique and custom-made for special service. You have been given spiritual gifts to enable you to perform that unique service. Jesus had a very clear vision of His service. He articulated it in Luke 4:18-19. For your service to be effective, you must zero in on your vision, rather than becoming “a jack of all trades and a master

SCRIPTURE:
Psalm 90:10, 12

The length of our days is seventy years or eighty, if we have the strength; yet their span is but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away...Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom—Psalm 90:10, 12

of none.” You must be very clear about the God-given agenda for your life, so that you will not be submerged in the agendas of others. As you serve, remember the words of John the Baptist: “A man can receive only what is given him from heaven” (Jn 3:27).

3 *Footstep Three. Surrender everything to this God-given service.* Total involvement is the only way to fruitful service. Jesus says it all in John 12:32: “I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains a single seed, but if it dies, it produces many seeds.” Our service must not be hindered by self-preservation, but should be marked by self-sacrifice, like our Lord.

4 *Footstep Four. Never give up on your God-given service.* As fragile jars of clay, we often become discouraged by obstacles that get in the way. Do not give up or give in. To continue, acknowledge your weakness and draw your strength from God, your great Help in trouble. The more difficult it becomes, determine to follow Jesus to Gethsemane and draw strength from the Almighty God who has promised you His presence.

5 *Footstep Five. Continue serving, even when you do not see success.* God has called you, not to be successful, but to be faithful. Didn’t Paul say, “I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants, nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow” (1Cor 3:6-7). Work diligently and faithfully, but leave the results to God. Serve as Christ served. At Calvary He appeared to be the great failure of history, but because He was faithful, God exalted Him to the highest place and established His kingdom forever.

Conclusion

Because life is short, seize today and serve Jesus Christ with all your heart. As you serve Him, fix your eyes on Jesus—with great anticipation—waiting for the day when you hear the beautiful words, “Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord.” Let us live for the line!



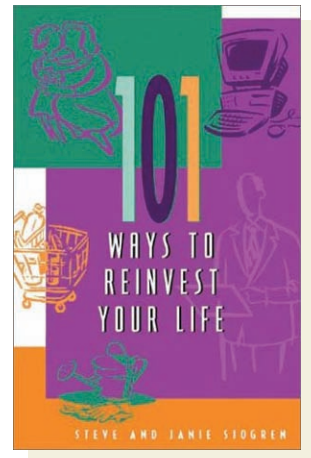
101 Ways to Reinvest Your Life

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

Are you at the time of life when you realize you have free time on your hands? Perhaps your children are gone or you are nearing retirement? Authors Steve and Janie Sjogren say, you ask the question, “How can I best spend my life from this point forward?” “It is time “to find a meaningful place to give your life away to others” (p. 9).

“Reinvestors are people ... forty and older who have decided to pursue an alternative to traditional retirement” (p. 10). To reinvest your life successfully, you must 1) Determine to be true to yourself; express your one-of-a-kind dream! 2) Resolve to pursue the dream God places in your heart. 3) Engage and begin your future now! 4) Arrange your life around your dream, and 5) Manage by becoming a steward of the dream God has given you.

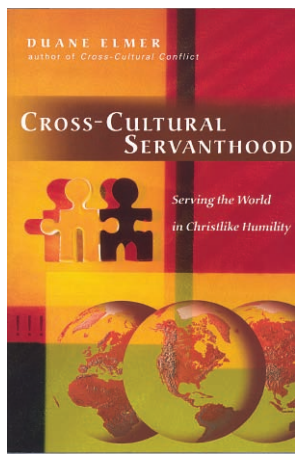
Following a meaningful introduction is a list of *101 Ways to Reinvest Your Life*. Too long to expand on, the list begins with airplane pilot and moves to car mechanic—from fire and police chaplain to household financial coach. Be it landscaper, nutrition coach, prayer warrior, grocery shopper or taxi service provider, there are so many ways to serve your community and thus, your God. A short read, full of careers to inspire dreams and ways of making the last half of life more fulfilling than the first!



by Steve and Janie Sjogren
NavPress
Colorado Springs, Colorado
2003 US \$ 8.00

Cross Cultural Servanthood

*Reviewed by Erika F. Puni, Director
General Conference Stewardship Department*



Written by a well-known cross-cultural specialist, Duane Elmer, this work explores the biblical concept of servanthood in the “simple, everyday events of life.” At the same time, Elmer acknowledges the complexity of leading as a servant “because it is culturally defined.” According to the author, “Serving must be sensitive to the cultural landscape, while remaining true to Scripture” (p. 12). This is not an option, but a calling for everyone who claims to be a follower of Jesus Christ.

The strengths of this book are many. It has a strong biblical base, supported by excellent cross-cultural research, and it draws from real people’s experiences from a variety of places. Its insights are practical and clearly expressed and can be applied to any ministry context; particularly from the perspective of those who are interested and want to engage in serving God and others in everyday situations.

by Duane Elmer
InterVarsity Press
Downer's Grove, Illinois
2006 US \$15.00

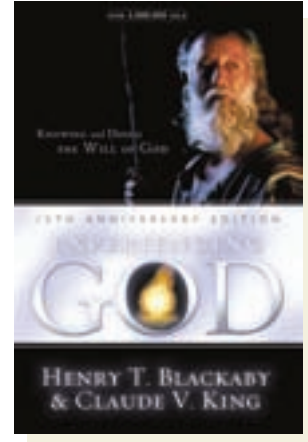
Experiencing God

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

In his book, Blackaby shares his belief about the kind of relationship God expects from a committed Christian. Human nature and many religions—including some Christians—represent our relationship with God as a partnership that is based on give and take. The author's proposal is that the believer needs to realize that God expects more.

God wants each believer to experience a real, intimate, and personal love relationship with Him. This does not come through a program, lessons, or a particular method. This is not about knowing *about* God; the Bible tells us that it is only possible to experience Him *in* and *around* our lives.

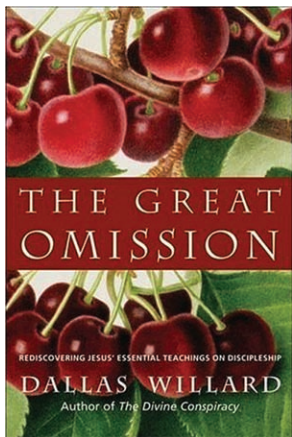
In short chapters followed by a summary and several high points, Blackaby leads us to discover what place God has for each one of us in *His* master plan, instead of asking Him to bless the plan that *we* have for our life. This work has changed the lives of thousands during the last eight years, and it will do the same for years to come. A very important read!



by Henry Blackaby & Claude King
Boardman & Holman Publishers
Nashville, Tennessee
1998 US \$19.99

The Great Omission

Reviewed by *Benjamin C. Maxson*, Senior Pastor
Paradise SDA Church, Paradise, California



by Dallas Willard
HarperSanFrancisco
San Francisco, California
2006 US \$23.95

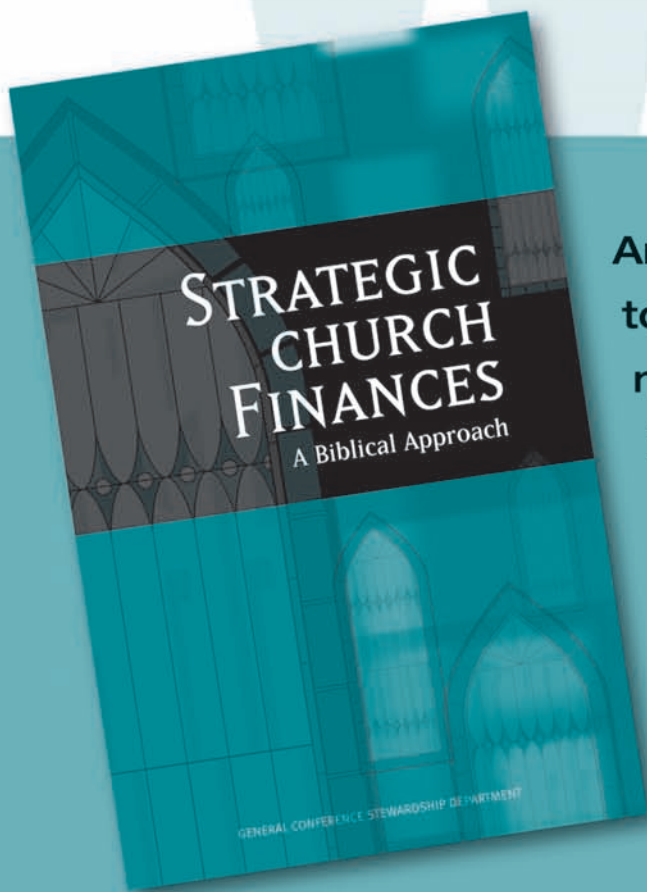
In an age when Christianity is becoming increasingly generic and losing its life-transforming focus, Dallas Willard presents a resounding call to reclaim Christ's teachings on discipleship. *The Great Omission* covers a number of years of discipleship study and emphasis. The author has been a clear voice in the study of spirituality and discipleship, and this volume continues his tradition of insightful writing in these areas.

As a collection of articles, essays, and presentations developed over many years, this book does have some repetition. However, that very repetition adds emphasis to the importance of the subject. Willard presents a clarion call to move from making Christians to Jesus' original commission to *make disciples*. In doing so, he confronts the contemporary reality of a Christianity that leads to lifestyles that differ little from those of the world around us. Instead, he challenges us with the concept that we must apply our understanding of Christ and God's kingdom to every area of life. For Willard, biblical Christianity means a journey of intimacy with God and learning from Jesus as our Teacher. Read this book if you wish to be challenged with the invitation to discipleship and disciple making.

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