



# DYNAMIC Steward

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April-June, 2009

## Revival

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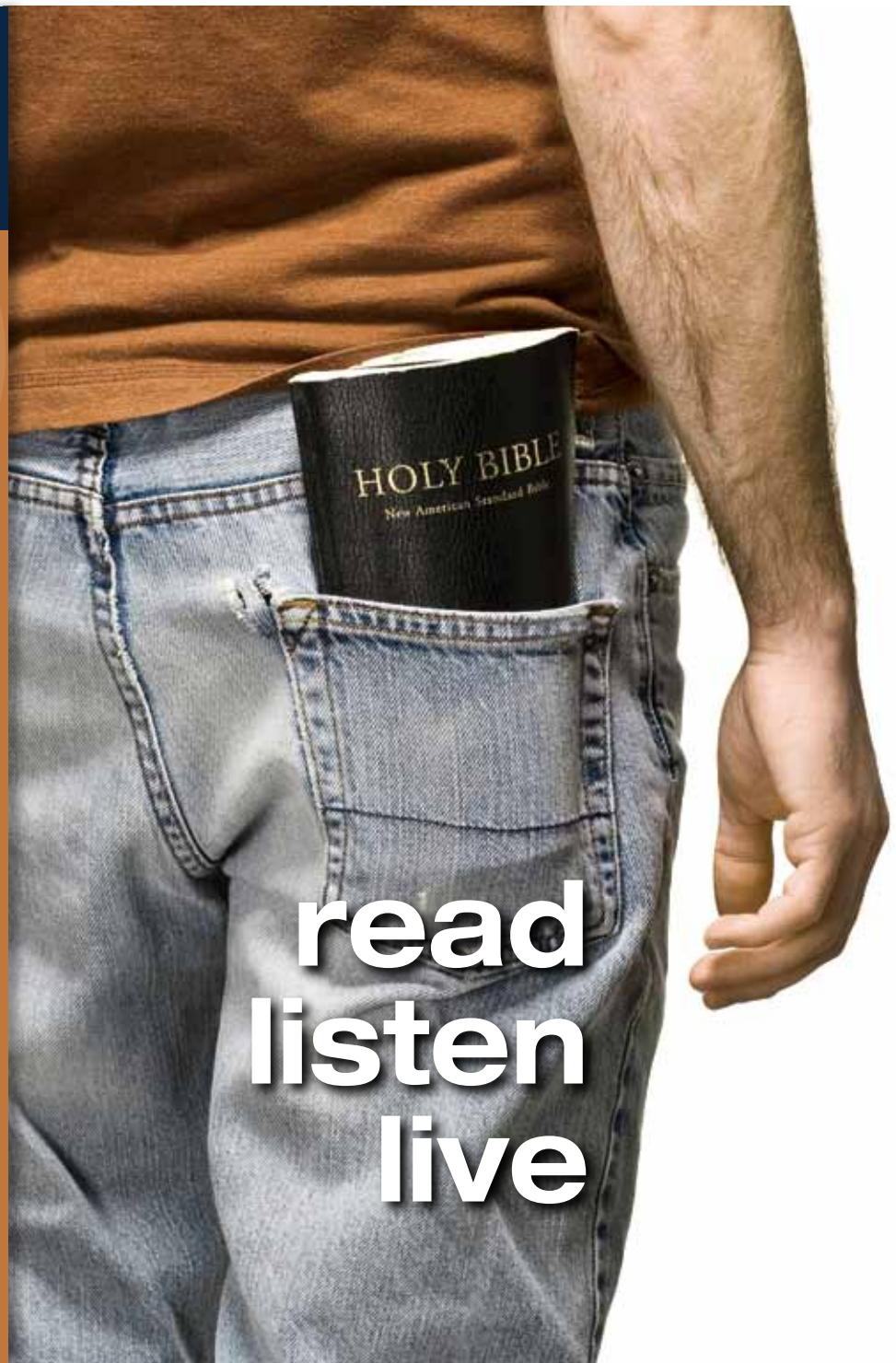
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Volume 13 ■ Number 2



read  
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live

# DYNAMIC Steward

This journal is produced by the Stewardship Department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists®. Comments and questions are welcomed. This publication may be duplicated as needed.



Exploring partnership with God

12501 Old Columbia Pike  
Silver Spring, MD 20904 USA  
voice: 301-680-6157  
fax: 301-680-6155  
e-mail: gcstewardship@

gc.adventist.org  
editor: Ovando-GibsonM@  
gc.adventist.org  
url: www.Adventist  
Stewardship.com

#### EDITOR:

Maria Ovando-Gibson

#### ASSISTANT EDITOR:

Mary Taylor

#### EDITORIAL ASSISTANT:

Johnetta Barmadia Flomo

#### CONTRIBUTING EDITORS:

Andrei Arfanidy  
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Kigundu Ndwiga  
Mario Niño  
Miguel Pinheiro  
Erika Puni  
G. Edward Reid  
Joseph Talipuan

## inside ds

Living an exemplary life of revival, writing volumes of Biblical commentaries and with ardent love for preaching, the Reformer Martin Luther with spirit and belief many centuries ago stated, “One thing, and only one thing, is necessary for Christian life, righteousness, and freedom. That one thing is the most holy Word of God, the gospel of Christ, as Christ says, John 11 [:25], ‘I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live’; and John 8 [:36], ‘So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed’; and Matt. 4 [:4], ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’”



Dr. Luther expressed his conviction of the role of God’s Word for the soul with clear understanding, “Let us consider it certain and firmly established that the soul can do without anything except the Word of God and that where the Word of God is missing there is no help at all for the soul. If it has the Word of God it is rich and lacks nothing, since it is the Word of life, truth, light, peace, righteousness, salvation, joy, liberty, wisdom, power, grace, glory, and of every incalculable blessing” (*The Freedom of a Christian*).

This issue draws our attention to the initiative “Follow the Bible.” General Conference Vice President Michael L. Ryan describes the facts that have given rise to this coordinated effort in the Current feature, “The Power” addressing stewardship, the Word and choices.

With a continued focus on the Bible, Dr. A. Allan Martin contributes his interview with Pastor and founder of Vagabondservant International Matthew Gamble. The entry “GODencounters: Following the Bible with our Lives” informs us of the “Spirit-led movement among Adventist young adults seeking a 24/7 experience of the living God.”

Dedicated to stewardship, this issue welcomes the participation of world division Stewardship Director Micah Choga addressing the topic of faithfulness and the giver. Our Tool feature will be available for download on our website at [www.adventiststewardship.com](http://www.adventiststewardship.com). Lastly, the Sermon item provides basic components for a stewardship church service.

May you be encouraged to tell your revival story of God’s Word in your life, and in partnership with the Holy Spirit may your preaching and teaching challenge those who read and listen, to ask the question, “how does God’s word use me?” (William A. Dyrness). It is in the merging of your story with God’s story that testifies to revival. An authentic expression of ‘living God.’

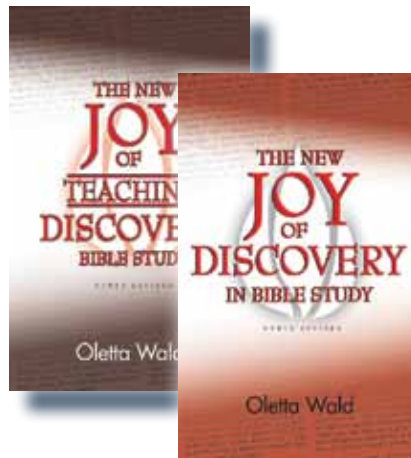
Alongside you in His service,

# resources



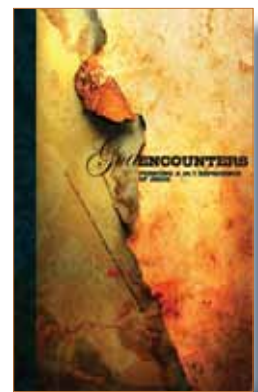
**Stewardship Services: Just in Time!**  
by David N. Mosser  
Abingdon Press  
Nashville, Tennessee  
2007 US \$10.00

Ready-to-use worship and preaching resources on stewardship. *Stewardship Services* provides biblically-based materials for twenty-four services, each of which includes suggested prayers, Scripture passages, and sermon briefs. These resources will help pastors preach with sensitivity to address the spiritual needs of the congregation. To order go to [www.abingdonpress.com](http://www.abingdonpress.com).



**The New Joy of Discovery in Bible Study**  
by Oletta Wald  
Augsburg Fortress  
Minneapolis, Minnesota  
2002 US \$9.99 each

This well-loved classic has been updated and simplified to re-energize your connection to the Bible. A companion to *The New Joy of Teaching Discovery Bible Study*, this volume uses the discovery method, in which you and others will discern, reframe, and illuminate the Bible. Both individuals and groups will continue to find meaning in this timeless approach. To order go to [www.augsburgfortress.org](http://www.augsburgfortress.org).



**GODencounters: Pursuing a 24/7 Experience of Jesus**  
by A. Allan Martin, Shayna Bailey, & Lynell LaMountain  
Pacific Press® Publishing Assoc.  
Nampa, Idaho  
2009 US \$14.99

*GODencounters* is a movement of young adults wholeheartedly pursuing a 24/7 experience with Jesus Christ. These pages form a tapestry of our lives so far, where we have found GOD and where we have been found by GOD. Each thread unique, frayed, and honest. We dare you to weave your journey in with ours as we go after a GOD that has come after us. The voices are diverse, eclectic, and may at times sound disjointed, but they echo the heart of a GOD who is very present. We invite you into the fray. Living recklessly for God's renown. To get your copy go to [www.adventistbookcenter.com/GODencounters](http://www.adventistbookcenter.com/GODencounters). Also available Get to a Gathering at [www.GODencounters.com](http://www.GODencounters.com). Visit us also online on @ MySpace & Facebook.



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## Stewardship of God's Word

Erika F. Puni, Director  
General Conference Stewardship



**W**hat is the place of the Bible in Christian stewardship? Where does the Bible (or the reading and study of it) fit into the life of Adventist Christians today? Why should church leaders care about how much time church members spend in the study of God's Word? Finally, how will the "Follow the Bible" initiative of the General Conference impact the lives of Adventists across the globe? These questions form the basis of this article that seeks to highlight the integral relationship between Scriptures and stewardship.



### The Holy Scriptures and leadership responsibility

Seventh-day Adventist leaders at all levels of the church should care about the welfare of our members; after all, we are about personal growth and preparing a people for God's eternal kingdom. Part of our duty of care includes the development of appropriate resources and the initiation of programs to build the body of Christ—the Church. With the "Follow the Bible" initiative, our leaders at the General Conference are embarking on a simple ministry idea—to revive our interest and love for the Word of God. In many ways, this is a restatement of a Christian value that we have always had. However, we have come to realize that many of our members today are not studying the Bible on a regular basis, which means that they are not being fed spiritually and are not growing in Christ. "Follow the Bible," therefore, is a church response and ministry initiative to address this weakness in the life of our faith community.

### The Holy Scriptures and Christian growth

The placement of the Bible as the first out of twenty eight fundamental beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists clearly shows the importance and high regard we have for the Word of God. It is a faith statement that testifies to our commitment to the fullness of the Old and New Testaments, and acceptance of the Bible as the standard test for us in matters of Biblical truth (doctrines) and Christian experience. This strong emphasis is a reflection of our historical roots as a Protestant movement and church.

Also, beyond our history and statement of Christian beliefs, we take this emphasis on the Bible seriously in the way we do church. For example, we have had since our early beginnings as a Christian organization the Sabbath School program that promotes daily Bible study and integration of God's Word into the lives of its members (children, youth, and adults). We also have, in addition to the established Sabbath School curriculum, the morning watch booklets and devotional books with daily Bible verses and readings. The purpose behind these devotional and Sabbath School resources is to help our people connect to Jesus and to have a personal experience with Him. We know that it is through the reading and studying of the Word that we can have an encounter with the risen Lord, and as a consequence of this experience grow in our personal lives as Christians.

### Stewardship ideas

The effectiveness of "Follow the Bible" will depend to a larger extent on how we as leaders of the local organizational units of the church promote and engage our people in this initiative. Let me suggest a few ideas that you may want to consider:

1. Re-evaluate the way you are doing Sabbath School to ensure that ample time is given Sabbath morning to the actual study of the Bible including opportunity for discussion, reflection, and integration of Bible truths.
2. Re-assess the availability and accessibility of Bible study resources (Sabbath School and devotionals) for your members, and if necessary subsidize or provide for persons who may not be able to purchase these resources for themselves.

3. Retool your leaders and members by providing regular training classes on how to study the Bible.
4. Promote family worships and encourage the reading of the Bible as an ongoing activity for all members of the family.
5. Initiate programs and activities in the church, particularly with young people and children that will create interest in the Bible, and the reading of it.
6. Encourage the use and reading of the Bible in your corporate church worship and service.
7. Challenge and involve church members in conducting Bible studies with non-Adventists in their homes and in small groups.

So, why should we study the Bible? “These are the Scriptures” according to Jesus “that testify about me” John 5:39 (NIV).

## The Holy Scriptures— God’s written Word

The Seventh-day Adventist Church upholds the Bible as the “written Word of God” (*Church Manual*, 2005, p. 9). As Adventist Christians, we believe the Bible is the “infallible revelation” of God’s will and “necessary for salvation” (Ibid.). The Bible is the “standard of character, the test of experience, the

authoritative revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God’s acts in history” (Ibid.). From the perspective of Adventist beliefs, the Bible is part of our church DNA; it’s a basic component of our being Adventist!

Christian stewardship on the other hand, is about living the will of God in the totality of our lives as Christ’s disciples. It is allowing God’s rule to take hold of us in the ways we relate to people and deal with situations on a daily basis. Our response to God however will be influenced and affected by our hearing of His voice as He speaks to us from the pages of Scriptures. In this sense, our reading and understanding of the Bible impacts us in the way we live life now as God’s people. Being able to read, hear, and understand the Word of God in our cultural contexts is an important Christian discipline of stewardship.

## stewardship window

news from the  
director’s desk ...

### Report from the Associate Director

The last trimester of 2008 took Associate Director Jean-Luc Lézeau to India where MD Joseph, stewardship director of the Southern Asia Division had prepared a two week itinerary in four provinces of India.

He held seminars for pastors and administrators representing 75% of the membership of this division. Lézeau then traveled to Miami for the Inter-American Division Stewardship Consultation followed by seminars in Guadeloupe where they had one of the highest SDA attendance division-wide.

Lézeau states 2009 started out well with the North American Division Advisory held in South Carolina where the whole GC stewardship team was present. Reports were given on how stewardship ministry is making an impact in the world.



MD Joseph (left) and Jean-Luc Lézeau at the South Central India Union Stewardship Seminar in September 2008.

The Associate Director also attended the National Pastor’s Convention in San Diego; followed by a trip to Nairobi for the production of a stewardship program for the Hope Channel hosted by Stewardship Director Kigundu Ndwiga of the East Central Africa Division.

## GODencounters: Following the Bible with Our Lives

**A. Allan Martin, PhD, CFLE**  
Associate Professor of Discipleship &  
Family Ministry  
Andrews University  
Berrien Springs, Michigan



Allan is an ordained minister. He holds a Masters degrees in Theology [Christian Formation and Discipleship] and Psychology, as well as a PhD in Clinical Psychology. He is the Associate Professor of Discipleship & Family Ministry at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University. He also serves as the young adult ministry coordinator for the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists. Allan and his wife, Deirdre, are cofounders of dream VISION ministries [www.dreamVISIONministries.org], a para-church agency dedicated to equipping new generations in Christian lifestyle and leadership. They are part of the presenting team for the nationally touring marriage celebration, From This Day Forward. Along with daughter Alexa, they reside in Niles, Michigan.

### Interview with Matthew Gamble by A. Allan Martin

**M**atthew Gamble, an atheist fascinated by the Rastafarian religion as a teen, was involved in drug smuggling in his early young adult years. Encountering GOD through the Bible and the love of a small, African-American Adventist Church in North Florida [USA], Matthew's life was transformed. Recently completing his doctorate focused on preaching to postmodern culture, Gamble speaks around the world at youth and young adult gatherings, often a featured Biblical presenter for GODencounters [www.GODencounters.org].

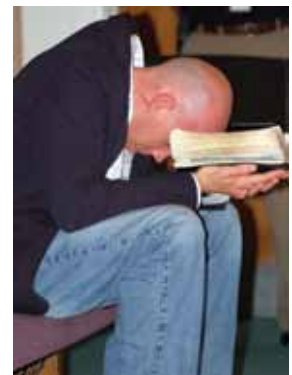
Back from Chile, off to Los Angeles, briefly back home in Connecticut, Matthew's been globe trotting, so we opted to catch him via Facebook to chat a bit with *Dynamic Steward*.

*Q: In today's postmodern milieu, what role might the Bible play in people's lives?*

Many people find the Bible to be overwhelming. As many of you already know, the Bible is a large book, comprised of sixty-six smaller books that span some four-thousand years of history, written by roughly forty different contributing authors. Add on top of this all the translations that are out there today, many people simply don't know where to start. Often, the only dose of the Bible that a churchgoer receives in a given week is when they go to church. I believe that the Bible can play a significant role in a person's life so long as they learn how to approach the Scriptures. As they turn to the Bible with a desire to better understand God and this world they live in, they will find a perspective, not of this world, guaranteed to change their paradigm.

*Q: What role does the Bible play in your life?*

For me personally, I look to the Bible as a textbook from my Rabbi Jesus. I believe that He wants to reveal the way that He views life, this world, decisions that are made, etc. in hopes that I will begin to think and behave more like Him, as well as see things the way that He does. For instance, this year I started reading Leviticus for my devotional time in the Word. While reading it I started to recognize how much pain and suffering sin causes and how intentional God is to create a way of forgiveness and restoration. So even in biblical books that may initially come across confusing and dated, God is still in the midst of the words speaking truths into our lives so long as we are willing to listen.



*Q: As GODfollowers, describe our way of relating to the Bible (aka the Word).*

I truly believe that it is a living Word that has the power to transform lives. Shortly after I had moved from being an atheist to becoming an agnostic, I met a Seventh-day Adventist pastor. I told him my life story of sin and confusion. He then prayed with me and gave me a New Testament Bible. In the Word, I was introduced to a Man by the name of Jesus, Someone who I had heard about, but didn't know. God used the Bible to speak truth into my life by revealing to me the life and teachings of Jesus. At the core of being a GODfollower is the recognition that Jesus is

**SCRIPTURE:**  
**John 12:32**

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# young adult

your Rabbi and that you are His disciple. A disciple of Jesus recognizes that He is the Word (John 1:1) and because of this, the Bible contains words that testify of Him (John 5:39). It is out of this recognition that a GODfollower views the Holy Bible as one of the most significant sources of direct connection with Jesus whereby they are taught by the Man Himself. This direct connection is at the core of the GODencounters movement that is emerging among new generations.

*Q: Tell us a bit more about GODencounters and your experience.*

GODencounters is a Spirit-led movement among Adventist young adults seeking a 24/7 experience of the living God. The transformation taking place in the lives of those experiencing GODencounters is from being spectators of church, to becoming the Church (aka the body of Christ). Young adults are being empowered to recognize that God is alive and well today and that He has a plan and purpose for their lives. At the core of GODencounters is the Word of God, as young adults are seeing afresh the relevance of Jesus' teachings in the 21st century.

Several years ago I was invited to preach at a GODencounters gathering in Florida [USA]. From the moment I arrived and started to meet the team of organizers, I knew that something was different. It was not about the event, but truly about people experiencing God in a tangible way. All aspects were taken into account by asking the question, "what might be done to better enhance a persons ability to experience God?" Intentional, sacred space was made for Jesus to be lifted up that in so doing He would draw all people unto Himself (John 12:32).

*Q: As a young adult, but also a minister, what inspiration might you offer to local churches that are living, submitting to, abiding in, and giving the Word in their communities?*

To the pastor, I would say preach Jesus in every message in a way that is relevant to new generations. I am not suggesting that you try to become someone you are not, I am simply asking you to consider what they are going through and make Jesus plain to them in every message.

To the church attendee, I would simply invite those of you who this speaks to, to discover Jesus afresh in your life. Seek out a personal experience of Him. Start with the Gospel of John, and just take it a section at a time seeking to learn from Jesus. Allow Him to speak to you, challenge you, and engage you. Surrender your life to Him, His teachings, His lordship in your life. From this posture you move forth into the world as one who has encountered GOD and is a disciple of Jesus called to serve those around you in His name.



Go to [www.GODencounters.org](http://www.GODencounters.org) or email [info@GODencounters.org](mailto:info@GODencounters.org) for more details and information. GODencounters: Pursuing a 24/7 Experience of Jesus is available at your local Adventist Book Center or online [www.adventistbookcenter.com/GODencounters](http://www.adventistbookcenter.com/GODencounters).

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Author bylines:

Matthew Gamble, DMin, is the founder of Vagabondservant International. For more information go to [www.matthewgamble.com](http://www.matthewgamble.com)

A. Allan Martin, PhD, CFLE is Associate Professor of Discipleship & Family Ministry at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary and voluntarily serves as curriculum coach for GODencounters.





## With Micah Choga

**Micah Choga**

*Division Stewardship Director  
Southern Africa-Indian Ocean*



*Micah Choga currently serves as the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Stewardship and Trust Services Director. Micah also served in the Central Zimbabwe Field as Stewardship, Sabbath School, and Personal Ministries Director. When the field organized into a conference, he served the conference as both the Executive Secretary, Stewardship Director, and later as both Secretary and Ministerial Director. Micah served the Zambezi Union Mission as Stewardship Director, Global Mission and Satellite Evangelism Coordinator. After the union organized into a Union Conference, he served as Stewardship Director, Global Mission Coordinator, Ministerial Secretary, and Executive Secretary of the Union Conference. Micah is married to one wife. They have five children and one grandson. Hobbies: Preaching the Word of God and gardening.*

**SCRIPTURE:**  
**1 Corinthians 4:2**

### **Favorable conditions: the challenge of a steward**

The biggest challenge facing the steward is that of becoming a mature God-loving steward whose faithfulness to God is not determined by conditions or by the behavior and actions of other people. Many times stewards think that they are faithful to God when they are only responding to favorable conditions in their own eyes. Sometimes situations reveal who we really are. The journey of faithful stewardship is sometimes beset with challenges that have led some stewards to decide to stop supporting the church.

When we talk about the unconditional faithfulness of the steward, we are actually referring to a situation where the steward remains faithful in spite of the situation. It should be noted that this presentation is not in any way promoting irresponsible stewardship nor is it saying that we should allow misuse of church funds. It should be well understood that responsible stewardship involves accountability and proper use of funds given. There is no way we can promote giving and leave out issues of transparency, internal control and accountability. However, this presentation is not meant for those who handle funds but for the givers.

### **Individual giving and faithfulness**

*Question: "Why should faithfulness not be determined by favorable conditions?"*

In the parable of the wheat and the tares in Matthew 13, Jesus points out that tares and wheat will always coexist in the church. This suggests that when a steward gets to a point where he thinks that all should be well in the church and that no one should be found to misuse church funds, such a steward would have forgotten that the good and the bad are found in the church. The history of the children of Israel testifies to the fact that always among God's children there are two groups of stewards who coexist. Even among the disciples of Jesus we had Judas Iscariot who always misused church money. It is interesting to note that regardless of the behavior of Judas, Jesus never discouraged people from giving on account of such unfaithfulness on the part of Judas. Just because we are always going to have these two categories of stewards, it is important that the faithful steward not be affected by the behavior of those around them. In other words, the steward who would want the conditions to be right in order to do right may not find the conditions they are looking for.

The second reason why the faithful steward is not supposed to be affected by the behavior of others is that, faithfulness is firstly, an individual responsibility before it becomes a corporate responsibility. God calls upon each one of us to be faithful. We will not appear before the judgment throne of God as a corporate body but as individuals. We are answerable before God for our behavior regardless of whether that behavior was influenced by a fellow church member or a church leader. In the experience of Korah and his friends as recorded in Numbers 16:31-33, God did not spare those they influenced but they perished together. There was no justification among their followers because faithfulness is an individual responsibility. This is why Paul says of stewards: "Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful" (1 Corinthians 4:2, NIV).

Stewards are called upon to be faithful. Faithfulness ceases to be faithfulness when it becomes conditional. Those whose faithfulness is determined by the be-



havior of other people will never be faithful. It is just like a sinner who says they will only repent when all others stop sinning. When God calls for faithfulness, He expects each individual to be faithful to Him regardless of the conditions that might be prevailing at that moment.

The invitation to faithfulness is not a partial invitation. It is a life time requirement. Good stewardship calls for faithfulness. Talking about the second coming Jesus raises a challenging question about faithful stewardship recorded in Matthew 24:45-51. The passage makes it clear that faithfulness does not require the presence of the master. Those who are faithful remain faithful even in the absence of the master. On the issue of faithfulness, John the Revelator says that God's children need to remain faithful to the point of death. "Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Revelation 2:10, NIV). Those stewards, who will hear the words of welcome from the master, are those who remain faithful in spite of the conditions and the situations. Our faithfulness should not be shaken even by death itself. Ellen White has this to say about such a behavior:

Some have been dissatisfied, and have said, "I will no longer pay my tithe; for I have no confidence in the way things are managed at the heart of the work." But will you rob God because you think the management of the work is not right? Make your complaint, plainly and openly, in the right spirit, to the proper ones. Send in your petitions for things to be adjusted and set in order; but do not withdraw from the work of God, and prove unfaithful, because others are not doing right. *9T*, 249 {CS 93.3}

There is no justification for unfaithfulness. God expects stewards to remain faithful to Him.

## Faithfulness and accountability

*Question: "Why should we remain faithful regardless of the conditions?"*

We are first of all accountable to God before we are accountable to men. Faithfulness is God's requirement not men's requirement. The behavior and actions of other people do not determine our acceptance before God. God still regards us as faithful even though the gifts we gave were misused by other people.

We all do business with certain shops, certain travel agents, yet if the workers of those people we do business with misuse money, we do not stop doing business with such shops, neither do we complain that our money has been misused. Yet, when it comes to the church, if something small happens we even blow the trumpet and want others to know that the church is misusing our money. We do not complain about the world that takes almost all we have. Yet, we complain about the church where we send the least of our money. This simply shows that we do not complain about the world because our interests are vested in the world and not in the word of God. This also shows that our hearts are more inclined to the world.

May the Lord assist all of us to remain faithful to Him regardless of the prevailing conditions or other people's behavior.

*The behavior and actions of other people does not determine our acceptance before God. God still regards us as faithful even though the gifts we gave were misused by other people.*



## The Power

**Michael L. Ryan**  
General Vice President  
General Conference of SDA



*Dr. Michael L. Ryan joined the General Conference staff in 1991 as the global mission coordinator. Previously, he served overseas for 16 years as a teacher/dean, associate director, education department director, and global mission coordinator of the previous Far Eastern Division in Singapore, including at the Central Philippine Adventist College. He is married to Laura Jean Haas, and has two daughters: Gina Marie Wyatt (son-in-law William and granddaughter Ella); and Heidi Jo Ryan.*

The giant timbers of the old cargo ship wrenched with practice as the power of the mighty river mysteriously rolled and twisted the load. The 4 cylinder diesel engine determinedly decorated the air with little puffs of black smoke, faithfully challenging the rush of the surging current. Through a crack in the roof I could see bursts of steam sputter off the hot exhaust as tiny rain drops tapped out their erotic rhythm. An old man squatted motionlessly on the cargo deck absorbing the vast equatorial jungle through the wrinkled eyes of experience. We were deep in the heart of Animism.

The thumps of the engine slowed as we turned right, toward the muddy bank. A small village loomed in the distance eerily fogged by a blanket of dense mist. With the notice of the ship, the river bank was alive with urgent activity directed by shouting voices and pattering feet. The boat would only hold the shore for about a minute and everyone knew it. At the instant of landfall fever-pitch-chaos loaded and unloaded cargo in a manner never seen in the western world. On the upper deck, the captain shouted out the seconds remaining until departure. Through a volley of burden bearing bodies I negotiated the narrow 12 foot plank to the shore managing to carry a small personal bag and a large brown box.

There they were. Eight smiling faces greeted me as I staggered up the muddy bank. Quickly, helping hands lifted my cargo and pulled me the last remaining steps to level ground. Quick greetings finished, we wound our way through brown thatch houses soon finding refuge from the rain on the large veranda of the Global Mission Pioneer's house.

The eight stood silently. Their faces were a picture of wonder as though they stood on the frontier of some great discovery. And then I saw him. He was an old man. Stooped by the years he wore a dark green sarong that just touched the tops of his crooked toes. His black framed glasses were thick and a paper clip served to attach the ear rest to the frame. Dark tattoos spread across his upper body competing for space with marks of former scars and piercing. His eyes were dark, alive, and large, staring at the large brown box.

As the first little black Bible with red facing came out of the box the old man stepped forward and grasp it instantly. His old crooked fingers held it before him. I watched him carefully. Slowly, he rubbed the cover of the Bible over his old tattoos. And then, holding the Bible before him, with bright eyes, he took a deep breath, clinched his jaw, slowly exhaled and then with the look of complete joy said, "Jesus words are my power."

### Stewardship of life

Stewardship of life begins and ends with the power of God's word. In every second of every day thousands of decisions are made. These decisions are made by people from diverse cultures, languages and religions. What will be done with time, influence, money, education, love, and loyalty?

For a Christian, these gifts have but one focus. God's mission for man is to be a living testimony of Christ's great sacrifice for all people. One of the greatest stewardship choices of life is to choose to be acquainted with God's Word—the power to make right choices unto eternal life.

### The facts

A world survey conducted by Andrews University revealed that only 51% of

**SCRIPTURE:**  
**2 Timothy 2:15**

Seventh-day Adventists have a daily Bible study program. This regrettable percentage might be explainable for the illiterate 22% living in the 10/40 Window. But, what possible excuse would there be for the rest of us? The church needs to renew its efforts to prioritize the diligent study of God's word.

## The power of his Word

After the ascension, tradition tells us, the disciples moved from hunkered petrified men to being courageous, bold witnesses for the Lord Jesus Christ. Fearlessly, they divided the world, spreading out from Europe to Asia and Africa. Without compromise they stood before kings and emperors proclaiming hope in Christ. Eleven of the twelve counted it but gain to suffer a martyr's death—the power of His Word.

The great men of faith, the reformers, grasped the power of God's word, defying earthly and religious powers, they showered the darkness with the light of God's Word and started the great reformation. Thousands were martyred, burned at the stake, sawn asunder, stoned and starved, thereby enlightening the great hope found in the Lord Jesus Christ—the power of God's Word.

Through the diligent study of God's Word and the guidance of the Holy Spirit the Advent movement embraced truth and proclaimed hope. Amid disappointment, criticism, sacrifice, and dissension, the pioneers without compromise circled the world with the 3 Angles Messages. Today, the Adventist church is a family of more than 25 million people found in 218 countries, operates 7,000 schools, 500 hospitals and clinics, more than 40 publishing houses, health food factories—the power of His Word.

## Follow the Bible

"Follow the Bible" is a new initiative to encourage Bible study. Mark Finley states, "Follow the Bible is part of a coordinated initiative by church leadership to lift the vision of Seventh-day Adventists worldwide in renewing their commitment to read, study, and share the Word of God." Elder Finley further states that, "church leadership envisions an international Bible route with a copy of a Bible traveling the world between April 2008 and June 2010. It is envisioned that the entire Adventist community will be invited to follow the Bible as it journeys the world. The journey will take it through the cities, towns and villages, inviting large numbers of Adventists to gather and recommit their lives to following the Bible through reading and study."

The initial phase of Follow the Bible will culminate at the 2010 General Conference Session in Atlanta, Georgia, USA. The touring-revival—calling Bible will be presented to the General Conference president who will use the moment to call God's people to follow the Bible.

## The stewardship of choice

We are living in momentous times. The scenes of Matthew 24, Revelation 6, and Daniel 7, present a sobering comparison for life in the 21st century. God's word can serve as an unailing guide to those who desire to be part of that great number, the saved, who will stand in white robes around the throne of God. It is a choice. I can personally choose to let God's Word change my life or I can choose to cast my future around my own ideas. I appeal to each person to be part of the great end-time revival predicted in the Bible. It will take place, but only in the power of His Word.

*"Follow the Bible is part of a coordinated initiative by church leadership to lift the vision of Seventh-day Adventists worldwide in renewing their commitment to read, study, and share the Word of God."*

—Mark Finley

Please visit the Follow the Bible website at [www.followthebiblesda.com](http://www.followthebiblesda.com). to learn more about the Follow the Bible initiative.





## Stewardship in Light of Wisdom

### True wealth

“Happy are those who find wisdom, and those who get understanding, for her income is better than silver, and her revenue better than gold. She is more precious than jewels, and nothing you desire can compare with her.” 3:13-15

“Take my instruction instead of silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold; for wisdom is better than jewels, and all that you may desire cannot compare with her.” 8:10-11

“Riches and honor are with me, enduring wealth and prosperity.” 8:18

“My fruit is better than gold, even fine gold, and my yield than choice silver.” 8:19

“I walk in the way of righteousness, along the paths of justice,  
endowing with wealth those who love me, and filling their treasuries.” 8:20-21

### Wisdom and character

“Treasures gained by wickedness do not profit, but righteousness delivers from death.” 10:2

“A slack hand causes poverty, but the hand of the diligent makes rich.” 10:4

“The wicked are overthrown by their evildoing, but the righteous find a refuge in their integrity.” 14:32

“Those who are attentive to a matter will prosper, and happy are those who trust in the Lord.” 16:20

“Wisdom is at home in the mind of one who has understanding, but it is not known in the heart of fools.” 14:33

“The wise are cautious and turn away from evil, but the fool throws off restraint and is careless.” 14:16

“Those who oppress the poor insult their Maker, but those who are kind to the needy honor him.” 14:31

“The human mind plans the way, but the Lord directs the steps.” 16:8

### A word to the wise steward

“Better to be poor and walk in integrity than to be crooked in one’s ways even though rich.” 28:6

“Know well the condition of your flocks, and give attention to your herds: for riches do not last forever, nor a crown for all generations.” 27:23-24

“When the grass is gone, and new growth appears, and the herbage of the mountains is gathered, the lambs will provide your clothing, and the goats the price of a field; there will be enough goats milk for your food, for the food of your household and nourishment for your servant-girls.” 25-27

“Wealth hastily gotten will dwindle, but those who gather little by little will increase it.” 13:11

“Do not wear yourself out to get rich; be wise enough to desist. When your eyes light upon it, it is gone; for suddenly it takes wings to itself, flying like an eagle toward heaven. 23:4-5

“A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold. The rich and the poor have this in common: the Lord is the maker of them all. 22:1-2

The Scripture quotations contained herein are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright © 1989, by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

# Wisdom personified: living stewardship<sup>1</sup>

“Who can find a virtuous and capable wife?  
She is more precious than rubies.  
Her husband can trust her, and she will greatly enrich his life.  
She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life.

She finds wool and flax and busily spins it.  
She is like a merchant’s ship, bringing her food from afar.  
She gets up before dawn to prepare breakfast for her household and plan the day’s work for her servant girls.

She goes to inspect a field and buys it; with her earnings she plants a vineyard.  
She is energetic and strong, a hard worker.  
She makes sure her dealings are profitable; her lamp burns late into the night.

Her hands are busy spinning thread, her fingers twisting fiber.  
She extends a helping hand to the poor and opens her arms to the needy.  
She has no fear of winter for her household, for everyone has warm clothes.

She makes her own bedspreads. She dresses in fine linen and purple gowns.  
Her husband is well known at the city gates, where he sits with the other civic leaders.  
She makes belted linen garments and sashes to sell to the merchants.  
She is clothed with strength and dignity, and she laughs without fear of the future.

When she speaks, her words are wise, and she gives instructions with kindness.  
She carefully watches everything in her household and suffers nothing from laziness.  
Her children stand and bless her.  
Her husband praises her: ‘There are many virtuous and capable women in the world, but you surpass them all!’

Charm is deceptive, and beauty does not last; but a woman who fears the Lord will be greatly praised.  
Reward her for all she has done. Let her deeds publicly declare her praise.”

Scripture taken from the New Living Translation (NLT) Holy Bible. New Living Translation copyright © 1996, 2004 by Tyndale Charitable Trust. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers.

This tool is available as a PowerPoint resource that can be downloaded from our website at [www.AdventistStewardship.com](http://www.AdventistStewardship.com).  
Suggested ideas: offering time, small group discussion, transitional periods in church services.

Happy are those  
who find wisdom,  
and those who get  
understanding, for  
her income is better  
than silver, and her  
revenue better than  
gold. She is more  
precious than jewels,  
and nothing you  
desire can compare  
with her.

Proverbs 3:13-15

<sup>1</sup>An acrostic poem about the capable (valiant, strong) woman (wife). Each of its 22 verses begins with one of the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet, in order. Woman is the humanized counterpart of personified Wisdom, whose efforts are those of human women; but the combination is one that no human being can maintain. A woman who fears the LORD is literally: “a woman, fear of the LORD.” This may symbolize the realization that fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom. The New Interpreter’s® Study Bible New Revised Standard Version, p. 926. Abingdon Press, Nashville, Tennessee.

The Book of Proverbs begins with the command to fear the LORD (1:7) and ends with the picture of a woman who fulfills this command. Her qualities are mentioned throughout the book: hard work, fear of God, respect for spouse, foresight, encouragement, care for others, concern for the poor, wisdom in handling money. These qualities, when coupled with fear of God, lead to enjoyment, success, honor, and worth. Proverbs is very practical for our day because it shows us how to become wise, make good decisions, and live according to God’s ideal. Life Application Study Bible, p. 1132. Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton, Illinois.

## Jesus Was No Fool

Senior pastor David Neil Mosser comments, "The ministry of Christ's church is only as strong as the resources that support it." Furthermore, he remarks that in the book *Stewardship Services: Just in Time!* "Abingdon offers pastors a resource intended to help lead congregations toward a fuller discernment of Christian stewardship."

In *Stewardship Services*, Dr. Mosser has provided worship aids and helps with each sermon brief. These will include "Calls to Worship, Prayers of Confession and Words of Assurance, Prayers prior to the Offering, Pastoral Prayers, Invocations, Benedictions, and other special-use prayers."

We have provided on these two pages an example of this resource. Consequently, you will find four prayers as worship aids for a stewardship church service followed by the sermon text, a sermon brief, and a prayer of benediction.

This sermon selection and adaptation by Dr. Mosser procured from *The Abingdon Preaching Annual* is by Mary J. Scifres. She serves as a consultant in leadership, worship, and evangelism. Her books include *The United Methodist Music and Worship Planner*, *Prepare!* and *Searching for Seekers*.

**SCRIPTURE:**  
**1 King 18:21**

### Invocation

Gracious God, we ask you this day to warm our hearts and encourage our spirits as we worship and magnify your holy name. In our hour of worship show us symbols and signs of your holy presence among us. Grant us the insight to relate the words of sacred Scripture to the living of our day-to-day lives. Make us attentive to the divine message that can make our mundane world such a joy. In the name of Christ, we pray. Amen.

### Prayer of confession

God of Wisdom, we confess that far too often we have behaved like those who questioned Jesus: "Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?" We struggle with knowing to whom we owe allegiance. Do we owe our ultimate allegiance to family or community? to nation or church? to our work or our family? By these questions, Lord, we put off declaring where our ultimate allegiance really lies. Help us understand that by setting up counterfeit choices in life we often become like those who tell Paul after he preached the gospel in Athens: "We will hear you again about this" (Acts 17:32). Our desire to revisit the gospel<sup>1</sup> ... is simply our polite way of saying we cannot make up our minds. How long, O Lord, can we "go limping with two different opinions" (1 Kings 18:21)?

Help us, we beg you, O Sovereign One. Give us singleness of heart. Help us obey Christ as Christ was obedient to death. Offer to us that word of assurance that our lives, lived in your divine purposes, will not be lived in vain. Offer us words of promise in ways that we can apprehend and obey in cheerfulness and thanksgiving. You, as our heavenly parent, have offered us untold riches in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Give us the will and heart to submit ourselves to the yoke that Christ offers us in freedom from sin even as he offers us the cost of discipleship as stewards of your grace. In all things, may we be a thankful people who offer your divine blessing to our world in need. Amen.

### Words of assurance

"As a father has compassion for his children, so the Lord has compassion for those who fear him. For he knows how we were made; God remembers that we are dust" (Psalm 103: 13-14). Remember that our Lord is our strength and shield, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

### Prayer of thanksgiving

O God of the gracious gift of life, we assemble today out of gratitude for the many and various ways that your grace interconnects with our lives. Too often we fail to express our gratitude to you at all; yet we recognize that worship allows us to convey the heartfelt thanksgiving we feel. We ask that our voices join other believers around the world, as well as the saints throughout the ages as our prayers ascend beyond the crowns of the clouds and reach unto the holy places where you, O Most High, make your home. Yet, as you transcend our human realm, we recognize that you mercifully live immanently within us and intimately among us. Make us a living portrait of your loving mercy that you yearn to communicate to our hurting world. Let us be the disciples you have equipped us to become. We pray this and every prayer in the merciful name of Jesus, our Lord and Advocate. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup>Sunday after Sunday.



## Scripture: Matthew 22:15-22

*[Then the Pharisees went and plotted to entrap him in what he said. So they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians saying, Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality. Tell us, then what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?" But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites? Show me the coin used for the tax." And they brought him a denarius. Then he said to them, "Whose head is this, and whose title?" They answered, "The emperor's." Then he said to them, "Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's." When they heard this they were amazed; and they left him and went away. NRSV]*

### Sermon brief: of wisdom and money

Jesus was no fool: he knew a trap when he saw one and responded accordingly. In this Gospel lesson, Jesus escapes entrapping questions intended to destroy by turning them into answers intended to puzzle. "Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's," Jesus says (v. 21). Rather than debating whether Caesar's face on the coin is idolatrous or paying taxes is unjust, Jesus reminds the listeners that money is symbolic and temporary. This lesson is lost on far too many people. Money is gained and accumulated for any number of reasons but almost always with the idea that it will last as long as it is tended carefully. Anyone who has watched stock portfolios change in this decade certainly has learned that such is not always the case! Still, people hoard money and manage it as if it were a permanent fixture on this earth. Jesus reminds us that this simply is not true.

Likewise, Jesus reminds us that God is invested in the permanent fixtures of our lives. It may be less clear what those permanent fixtures are, but we could venture some educated guesses: our lives, our faith, and our souls. All of these are the very stuff of which God made us, and thus "things that are God's." Yet, even the impermanent things of this life belong to God as they pass through our lives: time, talents, skills, passions, ideas, and material gifts (including money).

Still, Jesus relegates those impermanent things to their proper place, as being a part of this earthly world, important symbols, but not the stuff of which God made us. Woven carefully, these contrasting themes (giving the permanent fixtures of our lives alongside the impermanent things of this life to God) can be woven into a challenging stewardship sermon.

However, Jesus' wisdom and care, in not regarding people with partiality as he converses with his adversaries, might also bring a powerful message to light. Here, Jesus speaks as respectfully of the Roman emperor as he does of God, not a common courtesy that most of his religious colleagues would have given to Caesar. Likewise, even as Jesus criticizes the Pharisees and Herodians, Jesus criticizes his own disciples. To all of them, he says "Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites?" (v. 18). And to all of them, Jesus offers a wise but puzzling answer about coins and emperors and God—a warning to the "would-be wise." However,

Jesus stands alone after this difficult conversation. When everyone hears Jesus' amazing words, they leave him and go away. Such is the journey of many wise followers of God, and such may be our path when we, too, seek the wisdom of God and share it with others. But knowing that this wisdom comes from and belongs to God, we have no choice but to share it with others, for how else can we give that which belongs to God back to God but to share it with God's people—even if it means standing alone when all is said and done. (Mary J. Scifres)

### Benediction

May you leave this place with the blessed assurance that you are never alone. May you go into the world knowing that your life with God counts.

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# New Stewardship Resources

Bookmarks and logo lapel pin help you share stewardship principles

The Living Lordship bookmark and lapel pin will help you clearly communicate the significance of Jesus' crowns—the Cross and the Second Coming.



## *Living Lordship*

The Christian lives between the two focal points of the Cross and the Second Coming. Jesus Christ has two crowns. The crown of thorns reflects His identification with us on Calvary. The crown of victory reflects His Lordship in heaven and on earth.



These thought provoking bookmarks provide questions and answers many ask about stewardship and tithing.

Just as Christ found the road to the throne of God through a hill called Calvary, so as we experience the cross in Him, we share in His victory. He lifts us to share His throne, to wear the crown He holds for us.

Stewardship Department  
General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists®  
12501 Old Columbia Pike  
Silver Spring, MD 20904  
[www.adventiststewardship.com](http://www.adventiststewardship.com)

Lordship bookmark & Lapel Pin \$1.50 USD  
Bookmarks/Lapel Pin \$1.00 USD/each

To order these new resources call  
301-680-6157 or email your request to  
[FlomoJ@gc.adventist.org](mailto:FlomoJ@gc.adventist.org)

## 10 TITHING QUESTIONS ANSWERED

### 1. WHAT IS TITHE?

Tithe is one tenth of your increased money or product that is returned to God, holy and belongs to Him, the Creator of all material possessions and lives. The returning of tithes is an expression of faithfulness to God.

### 2. IS THERE A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TITHES AND OFFERINGS?

Yes. Tithes are returned with money. Offerings are our response to God's blessings and goodness. Tithes and offerings we worship and mission to make disciples.

### 3. WHEN SHOULD I TITHE?

Tithe should be returned when your income or increase is received.

### 4. HOW IS TITHE TO BE RETURNED?

With money, place it in an envelope and return it when you attend. Make it a habit to remember that He is the Lord of all your life.

### 5. HOW IS THE TITHE RETURNED?

Within the SDA church, the local congregation or conference/mission "storehouse" follows the church Policy.

### 6. HOW IS THE TITHE RETURNED?

The

## FACTS ABOUT . . . CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP

### 1. WHAT IS A STEWARD?

Stewards were created to represent God and His interests. To be a living image, stewards must mirror God's love, character and purpose. God's stewards are to demonstrate what He is like. Creation and redemption place stewards in close relationship with their Master. Stewards are disciples of Jesus Christ.

### 2. STEWARDS ARE MEMBERS OF GOD'S FAMILY

Stewards come from all races, tribes, languages, and nations to be members of God's family. Membership in God's family transcends all other ties and human relationships. Membership in God's family means that stewards become one in purpose and one in mission. This oneness of purpose fulfills the prayer of Christ: "That all of them may be one, Father, just as you and I am in you" (John 17:21).

### 3. WHAT IS STEWARDSHIP?

The