

DYNAMIC Steward

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January-March, 2011

Steward Leader

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DYNAMIC Steward



Exploring partnership with God

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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:

Johanna Barmadia Flomo

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS:

James Badu
William Bagambe
Paolo Benini
Micah Choga
Kwon JohnGHaeng
Pavel Liberansky
Wendell Mandolang
John Mathews
Javier Mejia Mejia
Mario Niño
Shekar Phillip
Miguel Pinheiro
Erika Puni
John Sanches

inside ds

After all, biologists have learned that every living organism is in one of two states: growth or decay. There is no such thing as maintenance; standing still is equivalent to decay. . .neither you nor I have any excuse for decaying. Be determined to grow every day in your leadership capacities,” states, George Barna in the concluding remarks of his book, *Master Leaders*.



It is with this perspective in view, that this issue of the *Dynamic Steward* calls attention to leadership within the context of stewardship by putting forward and presenting articles and best practices from our world field leaders in stewardship that call for deep reflection, challenge and yes, growth.

General Vice President Lowell Cooper with many years of stellar experience highlights the importance of leadership and building trust in the practice of stewardship leadership.

With a noted gift for writing and distinguished leadership in the field of stewardship, Dr. Scott Rodin defines the essence of a steward leader, provoking challenge with the themes of anointed versus appointed leadership.

This first issue of the year introduces three of our new world field division directors: James F. Daniel, associate director, Inter-American Division as well as Paul Liberansky, Euro-Asia Division, and Javier Mejia Mejia, Inter-American Division, as they share alongside colleagues their Best Practices in stewardship leadership.

Included in this issue are two women noted for their leadership in finance and stewardship: Sharon Staddon, CPA, vice president for Finance, Alaska Conference, with ministry experience from Alaska’s tundra to ADRA humanitarian aid work in the blazing desert of North Africa, and Elaine Hagele, vice president for Finance, Mid-America Union Conference, who spells out the acronym for PWYP in her article.

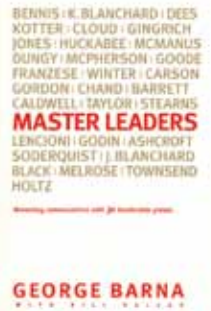
With proven ideas and much experience, Mario Niño, GC associate director shares three avenues for incorporating stewardship training in the world field.

Richard Kreigbaum in *Leadership Prayers*, remarks that, “when we answer the call to lead, we commit ourselves to enable others to see their dream more clearly and somehow make it happen. That is spiritual business and it cannot be done well without effective communication with the Spirit of God through prayer. When we lead well, exceptional achievement is possible. That is why we answer the call to lead. It is also why we follow great leaders. And it is why leaders pray so fervently.”

An aspect of leadership is also change and succession. This is the last issue of the *Dynamic Steward* in which I will serve as its editor. I thank each and every contributor and reader, whose feedback has generated professional growth in this most significant field. However, it is the spiritual development that came about in a shifting to an Owner-steward theological paradigm that will continue to shape my professional life and personal practice.

A heartfelt thank you, for letting me be of service in this capacity.

Masters Leaders
by George Barna with
Bill Dallas
Tyndale House
Publishers, Inc.
Carol Stream, Illinois
2009 US \$24.99



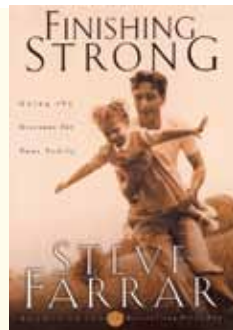
In *Master Leaders*, Barna lets us listen in on his conversations with “the greats” (including Barry Black, Ken Blanchard, Tony Dungey, Patrick Lencioni, Seth Godin, . . . and many others). Among the hard-won insights they reveal: how they achieved their own goals, what they learned from their failures, and the 16 essential leadership keys that you need to know—like how to discover the qualities that make a successful leader, develop a high-functioning team, resolve conflicts, and strengthen and equip others. To order go to www.tyndale.com.

Leadership Prayers
by Richard Kriegbaum
Tyndale House
Publishers, Inc.
Carol Stream, Illinois
1998 US \$14.99



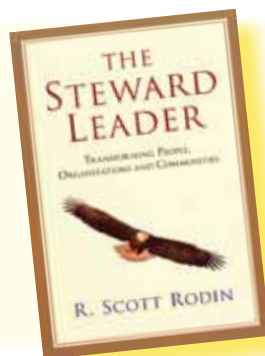
Ultimately, prayer determines the leader’s effectiveness in what matters most—the eternal matters of the human spirit, including the leader’s own spirit. Jesus taught us to lead creatively and wisely, but he refused to tell us exactly how to do it. He just said that the Word of God must be our Truth, and that he would leave his Spirit to guide ours. He also told us to pray. This book is an excellent leadership tool! To order go to www.tyndale.com.

Finishing Strong: Going the Distance for Your Family
by Steve Farrar
Multnomah Books
Colorado Springs, Colorado
1995 US \$13.99



Men, it doesn’t matter if you’ve had a great start in the Christian life. It doesn’t matter if you’ve stumbled time and again—or even fallen flat on your face. What matters most is how you finish. The man who hangs in for the long haul with his wife, his kids, and his Lord is an exception these days. Maybe only one man in ten will do it. This book will help you be that one. To order go to www.multnomahbooks.com.

The Steward Leader: Transforming People, Organizations and Communities
by R. Scott Rodin
InterVarsity Press
Downers Grove, Illinois
2010 US \$22.00



In an age of pragmatism where effective leadership is often defined by outcomes which work, Scott Rodin offers us a refreshing leadership paradigm shift. Rather than focusing primarily on the necessary acquisition of leadership skill sets or leadership development techniques or the pursuit of outcomes, Rodin maintains that the place for the leader to start and thereafter live is with the unseen part of the leader, the part that God knows and sees.” —Eugene Habecker

To order go to www.ivpress.com

Ministry in Hard Times
by Bill Easum and
Bill Tenny-Brittian
Abingdon Press
Nashville, Tennessee
2010 US \$12.00



If your church is facing ‘a wildcard world’ of hard times and constant change, then this is the book you need! The authors will help you chart your church’s future by explaining which things you can cut in hard times, and which you can’t. Plus, they will show you how to develop forward-thinking decisive, flexible and sensible leadership in tough times.” —Bob Whitesell

To order go to www.abingdonpress.com.

Stewardship and Pastoral Leadership

*Erika F. Puni, Director
General Conference Stewardship*



It is a fact that most Seventh-day Adventist pastors never had a class or course in stewardship during their ministerial training. At least, this was my experience; yet the church expects pastors to promote and teach the local congregation on principles and practices of Christian stewardship. With this reality as a background, I want to offer some suggestions on what pastors can do to grow faithful stewards in their local congregations.

To help understand my perspective in this article, I want to state two assumptions. First, the goal of Christian stewardship is to help individuals connect and have an experience with Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Second, the focus of stewardship education is value transformation.

Preach Biblical Stewardship

Given the role of the pastor as the primary religious educator, and based on my own experience in the local church I am convinced that preaching Christ (His person, His life, His ministry) with a broad focus on the

larger themes of stewardship will change people's hearts, attitudes and behavior. Preaching the Word is powerful because people accept this as the voice of God speaking through the expository presentation of Scriptures. And when Christ is the focus, this moves the center of the universe from self to God; a major paradigm shift for some people and the beginning of a new life and experience with Him. Preach on stewardship at least once a month.

Teach Financial Stewardship

Whereas preaching may cover a broad range of biblical themes and topics (and sometimes without mentioning the word stewardship), teaching financial stewardship has a much narrower focus: tithe and offerings. Teaching financial stewardship is necessary because it provides the pastor or the local stewardship leader the opportunity to address the specifics of returning the Lord's tithe and the giving of free-will offerings. In addition to teaching biblical principles and practices of financial stewardship in the Bible, this is also the right time to help church members understand the church's financial system and how it impacts mission both locally and globally. Opportunity must also be given during these sessions for people to ask questions and share testimonies, and quite often these are invaluable times to clarify issues and affirm their faith in God and the church. I suggest scheduling two teaching sessions on financial stewardship per calendar year.

Regular Visitation and Affirmation

I recognize that in some situations and parts of the world, visiting people in their homes or offices may not always be possible but the underlying principle is that connecting with individuals is very important and it can pay big dividends in terms of human relationships and support for the pastor and the church. Being in touch with people whatever the means opens up lines of communication and better understanding while offering the pastor opportunity to thank church members for their faithfulness to God. One way of affirming members in their stewardship is by thanking the congregation or acknowledging certain individuals during the worship time. Something simple, but it can be very effective; and often is better.

Report Often

Church members are not donors, they are stewards; but they would like to know how their giving is making a difference in the life and ministry of the church. Unfortunately, the church is perceived to be quick in asking and reminding people of their financial obligations but very slow in reporting back to its constituents and members. In the local congregation, there are a number of time slots and tools to disseminate information: the Sabbath bulletin, announcement time between Sabbath School and the worship service, church board and business meetings. By reporting and sharing information freely and frequently, the pastor can create a culture of trust and transparency within the church; biblical values that people are looking for when searching for a church to belong to.

Modeling and Mentoring

Faithfulness as a human behavior is contagious, and it is caught more than taught. Now I understand that faithfulness as seen on the surface/outside is an expression of Jesus' presence on the inside of us (it is Christ living out His life in me); but I also know that people take more notice of what we do than what we say. In the local church, what the pastor does speaks louder than what he or she

may say to the congregation. When the pastor is faithful in the returning of tithes and the giving of offerings, the members will follow suit. When members see that their pastor is a good steward with his health, his leadership, his family, his time, his devotional life, and including the management of his finances they will want to behave like him.

The point I am making is simple, our members will follow us wherever we lead them; and our personal influence can have immediate and long-term effect in the way they live their lives and in their service for God. This is a wonderful opportunity to make a difference by simply living the life of a steward, and God's grace is sufficient to help us when we are weak and feel inadequate. But whatever

the approach you may decide to use to promote and encourage faithfulness in your little corner of the world, what is important is to remember that stewardship is not another program of the church to implement but a way of life; living for Jesus 24/7.

stewardship window

news from the
director's desk ...

Forward Steps

In 2010 the Seventh-day Adventist church took two major actions in regard to Christian stewardship that I believe will have great impact in its work around the globe for many years to come. These two actions are significant because they reflect a collective understanding and commitment of the church to biblical stewardship.

1. Stewardship Ministries Department

At the 59th General Conference session at Atlanta, the church voted "to change the name of the Stewardship department at the General Conference office to the Stewardship Ministries department." This action to include the word "ministries" is consistent with the church's wholistic view that stewardship is a matter of the whole life; a total response of the believer to God. As a ministry, we are to help people connect and commit themselves to Jesus Christ as Lord of their lives, and this includes the surrendering of their all to Him.

Whereas in the past, some may have looked at the stewardship department as a revenue generating agency of the church in support of mission, this vote shows that stewardship like any other ministry is a bona fide service tool that does the work of mission: to make disciples of all peoples. With this understanding, the Stewardship Ministries is a committed partner in the "Tell the World" initiative of the General Conference and will play its part in supporting the three strategic plans of "Reach Up," "Reach Out," and "Reach Across."

2. Stewardship Director at Conference Level

At the Annual Council meeting (the first after Atlanta) of the General Conference Executive Committee at Silver Spring in October, the church

voted "To encourage every local field (conference/mission/region/field) to appoint a suitable, full-time Stewardship Ministries director." This action is closely aligned to the acceptance by the church of stewardship as a ministry (see the Atlanta action above), and the desire of the church leadership to make stewardship education a priority at conference and local church levels.

While this action will need to be addressed locally and its implementation subject to a number of local contextual factors, the message is clear: stewardship as a ministry and a way of life is very important. As a ministry service of the church, we want church members (Christian stewards) to grow in their personal relationship with Jesus; and as a consequence of this experience they will actively participate in the mission of God, and will be faithful to Him in their financial stewardship. Stewardship is a matter of the heart!

Building Trust: A Leadership Imperative

Lowell C. Cooper
General Vice President
General Conference World
Headquarters
Silver Spring, MD



Lowell C. Cooper is currently a general vice president and has served as an associate secretary at the General Conference World Headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland. His previous service includes that of a local church pastor and conference department director in Alberta, Canada, along with more than 16 years of leadership roles in Pakistan and India. He holds MDiv and MPH degrees. Lowell is married to Rae Lee (Figuhr), a nurse and musician. They have two adult children and three grandchildren. Lowell enjoys reading and reciting poetry.

Committing to a life of stewardship is built on trust in God. Practicing a life of stewardship is built on trust in people and organizations. People give to persons and organizations that they trust. They withhold support from persons and organizations that are not trusted.

Church leaders do well to teach a biblical understanding of stewardship. But if church members have a low level of trust in leadership they will practice their stewardship outside of church organizational channels. Therefore, a basic task of leaders is to conduct their personal lives and public leadership in a manner that builds trust. Leaders should remember that, *“To be trusted is a greater compliment than to be loved.”*¹

Building Trust

There are two kinds of trust that influence the stewardship practices of church members. The first is personal trust, the trust that employees and church members have in individual leaders. We judge ourselves by our intentions; others judge us by our actions. Building trust takes time and careful attention. It can be lost instantly through a single action.

Questions of personal trust are as old as human community. Jacob cheated his brother Esau. Laban cheated his nephew Jacob. Critics of the apostle Paul insinuated doubts about his integrity. Paul responded with a statement about the authenticity of his life.

*“...we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.”*²

For Paul the complexities of ethical and moral decision-making were governed by the overwhelming awareness that he was called by God. Through God's mercy he had been given a work to do. This conviction became his central reference point.

Paul asserts that the disciplinary code for his life is an internal one, not the result of external rules, guidelines, policies, audits or supervision. The realization that his ministry comes by the grace of God compels him to live a life of integrity. His behavior is based on the privilege of being associated with God's program for the world.

*“We live in such a way that no one will stumble because of us, and no one will find fault with our ministry.”*³

The development of trust towards someone in leadership finds its base in the interplay of character and competence. Leaders with upright character but who lack competence do not inspire trust. Similarly, those with unquestionable competence but with questionable character will not be regarded as trustworthy. Character and competence teamed together create a solid foundation for the growth of trust. Stephen M. R. Covey writes about the loss and restoration of trust in leadership. *“Generally, the quickest way to decrease trust is to violate a behavior of character. The quickest way to build trust is to demonstrate a behavior of competence.”*⁴

So let us consider behaviors that, over the course of time, help to build a reputation of trustworthiness.

1. **Keeping commitments, deliver results.** One of the most common reasons that people give when describing why someone is not a person of integrity



is that “he doesn’t keep his word.” Keeping promises, even oral ones, is a critical element that enables society to function. Imagine what life would be like if no one could be trusted. Confidence in leaders diminishes when people perceive that we don’t really mean what we promise.

2. *Practicing openness, honesty and transparency.* In building relationships with people words are like windows—they permit others to see into our innermost being. Leaders are seen to have integrity when they communicate with objectivity and fairness about their own actions or those of others. Admitting mistakes, acknowledging that one does not have all the answers, sharing the bad news along with the good helps to build trust.
3. *Building healthy relationships.* Practices that build good interpersonal relationships also build a perception of integrity. When leaders affirm the value of others and care deeply about their well-being, when leaders protect the confidentiality of sensitive information they are acting in ways that nurture trust. Even the simple act of listening indicates respect for others, their views and personhood.
4. *Demonstrating principle-based convictions in moments of crisis.* Psalm 15 describes the kind of person who can stand in the presence of God. One of the characteristics is that he “*swears to his own hurt and does not change.*”⁵ Moments of crisis do not develop character, they only reveal it. The person who is able to subject emotions to objectivity and reason, even under adverse pressure, is likely to be trusted.

Organizational Trust

The second kind of trust is organizational trust, the firm conviction that an organization’s purposes are valid and its operations will be consistent with its policies and public statements. Besides living in a way that builds personal trust, leaders in the church must also function in a manner that builds trust in the church as an organization.

This is one of the most important global leadership tasks in the Seventh-day Adventist church. For the reality is that mistakes and failures occurring in one local church or conference can be, and usually are, communicated instantly to many other locations around the globe. An attitude of distrust focused on a particular unit of church organization can quickly metabolize into a generalized distrust of the whole

organization. This is especially true in the area of managing church funds, the tithes and offerings made available to the church as an expression of members’ stewardship.

Since responsibility and decision-making are widely dispersed throughout the Seventh-day Adventist organization a church member should have confidence that the financial oversight system assures credibility in financial management and accountability across the entire range of denominational structure. When a church member, as a response to God, presents tithe and offering to the church the member has a right to expect that the funds will be used responsibly and for the purposes indicated.

Members deserve to know how tithes and offerings are used. Timely reporting of what is done with tithes and offerings is as important as instructing members in the practice of stewardship. There is a very close connection between the practice of stewardship in the life of church members and the practice of leadership in those entrusted with responsibilities. The examples set by those in positions of leadership exert a weighty influence, beneficial or detrimental, to the culture of stewardship in the entire church.

¹George Macdonald (1824–1905).

²2 Corinthians 4:1, 2, The Holy Bible, New International Version, Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society.

³2 Corinthians 6:3, The Holy Bible, New Living Translation, Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, Illinois.

⁴Stephen M. R. Covey, *The Speed of Trust*, Free Press, p. 133.

⁵Psalm 15:4, The Holy Bible, New King James Version, Copyright © 1999 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

Becoming a Steward Leader of No Reputation

At any moment in my trajectory as a leader, if you had asked me for a Scripture that epitomized the leadership ideal, I likely would have pointed you to Nathan's directive to King David, "Whatever you have in mind, go ahead and do it, for the LORD is with you" (2 Samuel 7:3). I could identify with David as "God's man at God's time," and I believed that God would pour out his wisdom and favor if I could be such a man. After all, there were kingdoms to conquer and people to be led. There were great things to be done for the Lord, and no vision was too limited, no goal too small.

Reflecting back on my leadership experiences and the leadership I have witnessed in my years of consulting, I would now point to a different verse. In speaking of Jesus' incarnation, Paul tells us that Jesus "made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant" (Philippians 2:7 KJV). It does not say that Jesus became a man of *bad* reputation or of *questionable* reputation, but simply of no reputation. That is, reputation, image, prestige, prominence, power and other trappings of leadership were not only devalued, they were purposefully dismissed. Jesus *became* such a man, not by default or accident, but by intention and design. It was only in this form that he could serve, love, give, teach and, yes, lead.

In reflecting on my years in the seminary president's office, the church and the living room, I have come to the conviction that true Christian leadership is an ongoing, disciplined practice of becoming a person of no reputation and, thus, becoming more like Christ.

My journey from the one verse to the other marks a significant progression for me. The former verse was a direct word spoken from God to a specific person, and I extrapolated it to apply to me and to Christian leadership

in general. The latter verse was a description of the nature of Jesus, whom I am called to follow—simply and humbly. The former focused on God's blessing on my work, the latter on my response of obedience and submission to his nature.

This study of the steward leader has grown out of a combination of my work in holistic stewardship, my study of leadership and these honest reflections on my journey. Taken together, I am learning that everything flows from the transformed heart of a godly steward. As godly stewards we do indeed offer only our vulnerable self, but we can do so with confidence and great joy. That is a very different journey from the one I began two decades ago.

In the following five areas, I've begun to learn what it is to be this sort of steward leader. In each area I have had to confess my misunderstanding of Christian leadership. I've also had to embark on a new journey of transformation that leads to freedom and the joyous obedience of a steward leader.

Anointed Versus Appointed

I know of few Christian leaders today who were anointed before they were appointed. We have mostly employed the business model of doing careful searches, looking for Christian leaders whom we can appoint to office. We check their credentials, put them through rigorous interviews and give them psychological tests before we make the critical appointment. Once they are in place, we then anoint them and ask God to bless their work.

The biblical evidence seems to indicate that God selects leaders in the opposite order. Samuel anointed David before appointing him king. The selection criterion for leadership was not based on who seemed most fit for the appointment, but on whom God had anointed for the task. And appointment without anointment always led to disaster.

I have never been asked in a job interview if I sensed God's anointing for a position. If I had, I don't know how I would have answered; the question never entered my mind.

Anointing is critical to the task of Christian leadership because of its nature as a unique form of leadership. Christian leadership, which I define as the work of the steward leader, requires nothing less than a complete, wholesale submission of your life in service to God and God only. It is the "losing of your life" to the work that God wills to work in you to benefit your institution, school, church or organization.

And the stakes are high. Nowhere else in the Christian life is the price of divided loyalties so costly for so many for so long. Ineffective and fallen leaders compromise kingdom work, and the effects are both temporal and eternal. Therefore, leadership must be entered with the utmost seriousness and only when you have clearly been anointed for the task. I have no criterion to offer or search process to recommend in determining anointing, but I am convinced that this biblical model needs to be taken more seriously during the selection of leaders.

Fighting the Need to Increase

When John the Baptist saw Jesus walking in his presence, he made the declaration, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). Most Christian leaders would say they wish that Jesus would increase and they would decrease. But it is hard to decrease in a leadership position. Natural trappings distinguish those in leadership, such as salary, title, prestige, priority, power, influence, honor and

advancement. And in each area lie tempting opportunities for increase. There are also motivations to build a kingdom in which we house our growing collection of leadership trappings. Not only must we meet this desire for the fame and fortune of leadership with resistance, but, according to U.S. President John Adams, we must also have "a habitual contempt of them."¹

Perhaps the hardest place to decrease is in the influence and the power we hold over people and decisions. For this reason we find Christian leaders who are overly directive at best and autocratic at worst. As a result we produce churches and ministries that are rife with learned helplessness. By overestimating our worth we help our people depend on us for everything. And that dependence feeds into our need to be needed, to be the visionary, to be in control. We tell ourselves that the more we lead in this way, the more our leadership is valued and our presence desired.

Of course, this is not real leadership but a counterfeit that contributes to *our* increase and expands *our* kingdom. This type of leader is an owner-leader. This leadership does a terrible disservice to people, leaving them uninvolved and underdeveloped. It wastes resources and limits ministry, all under the guise of strong leadership and the use of God-given talents for "getting things done." Leadership pioneer Robert Greenleaf reminds us that the difference between a true servant-leader who is servant first and a leader-servant who seeks leadership first lies in the growth of the people who serve under him or her. The test question is, "Do those served grow as persons; do they, *while being served*, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?"²

Steward leaders are stewards over the people they serve. They cultivate people. Leadership bent on self-centered increase lacks integrity and is usually dishonest. Integrity bears witness externally to all that we are internally. It does not derive from or depend on what is external, on an external increase. For that reason, godly integrity begins with our God.

I have come to understand that the call of the steward leader is a call to a lifestyle of an *ever-decreasing* thirst for authority, power and influence, where our quest for reputation is replaced by confidence in the power of God's anointing.

Being and Doing

A proper understanding of our creation in the *imago Dei* also teaches us that what is most important to God is not what we do but who we are. Secular leadership experts are waking to the fact that the key to leadership effectiveness is self-awareness.³ In Christian terms this means that the leader, through self-awareness and self-criticism, is the one who is transformed first.

For this reason the greatest tool for effective steward leaders is a mirror and a group of friends to be sure they are looking into it with clarity and focus.

Becoming a leader of no reputation means not being afraid to stare down your weaknesses and uncover the messy stuff in your private world. It means letting God transform you. And more importantly, it means knowing how much you need that transformation, far more than anyone else in your organization. When this ongoing transformation is added to the desire to decrease while Christ increases, all under the anointing power of the Spirit, the steward leader begins to emerge.

Leadership Is a Miracle

We must approach leadership in the same dependent humility. The sole responsibility of the steward leader is joyous, responsive obedience. Throughout history God looked to the least, the weakest, the outcast, the untalented, the sinful and the rejected to give great leadership at historic times. I don't think he has changed that approach today. If we are honest as leaders, we know that our capacity to lead is easily exceeded by the size and complexity of our call. We know that there are others more talented, more prepared, more spiritual and more courageous than are we. But great, godly leaders have always worked at that miraculous intersection where humility and faith meet the awesome presence and power of God's Spirit—and the miracle of leadership happens.

It doesn't mean we don't prepare ourselves, hone our skills and seek to be the best we can be for the kingdom. What it does mean is that, in the end, all that we bring will fall woefully short of what is required, and we will be ever thrown again into the grace and faithfulness of God to work the miracle of leadership in and through—and even in spite of—our small pile of skills and talents.

When God uses us to lead effectively, we should fall on our knees in wonder and thanksgiving that we have seen again this miracle worked in our midst. However, it is far too easy for us to take ownership of the miracle and to believe that the results are due to our own wonderful abilities and innate leadership qualities. If and when we make this subtle yet devastating shift, we become owner-leaders, and the efficacy of our leadership for the kingdom is over. We are on our own, cut off from the power and preservation of the Spirit. Most every leader will find him- or herself at that place at some point in his or her work, and it is a terrifying place to be.

Godly leadership is the miracle of God's use of our earthen vessels for the glorious work of his kingdom. To miss this miraculous aspect of leadership threatens everything we do as leaders, and our office or study will become the loneliest place on earth. I have come to better appreciate the miracle of godly leadership and its connection with selfness, the need to decrease and the power of God's anointing as a defining characteristic of the steward leader.

Seeking the Right Applause

As public figures we receive both undue criticism for the failures of our institutions and unmerited praise for their successes. The true calling of leadership requires us to accept the former and deflect the latter. That is, our job is to take the blame for mistakes made by those under our leadership and to deflect the praise by redirecting it to those most responsible for our success. In this way we keep ourselves in balance, never taking the criticism too personally and not accepting the praise too easily. But this balance is

Becoming a Steward Leader of No Reputation (*continued*)

very difficult to maintain.

Yet keeping this balance leads to the relatively unusual experience of finding freedom in leadership—a central concern of this book. Steward leaders are *free*! We can know freedom from the tyranny of self-preservation and advancement only as we accept criticism and deflect praise. The success of the steward leader lies significantly in his or her ability to keep this twofold movement of leadership in balance. Leaders who inflict pain lose trust and dishearten their people. Leaders who absorb praise produce resentment and sacrifice motivation.

Two significant temptations come into play here. The first is the fear of rejection that causes us to run from confrontation. It comes when we desire to make everyone happy and to measure our performance, our effectiveness and our "leadership" by others' approval. We are motivated by the idea that good leaders will not generate conflict and that rejection of our performance as leaders is a rejection of our personhood and character.

The second temptation is to lead by reacting. We see which way the wind is blowing and steer that direction, regardless of the situation. We do not want our people to be anxious, to question our decisions or to disagree with our reasoning. We want harmony and unity, which is commendable. But left unchecked, this desire causes us to sacrifice courage, vision and risk taking. It brings us momentary applause, but ruins us in the end. To paraphrase a quote from Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Some leaders worry themselves into nameless graves, while here and there some forget themselves into immortality."

The goal of the steward leader must be to go to bed every night with a clear conscience and a right heart before God. God asks only one thing of steward leaders: that we seek with all our hearts to know his will and respond obediently and joyfully.

Before taking on one of my leadership positions, I spent a couple of

hours with a man whom I respect for his wisdom and leadership abilities. He gave me encouragement and good advice, and before I left, he told me something that both inspires and haunts me to this day: "Scott, in whatever you do, always strive to be a man that God can trust." I now believe that the man or woman God can trust is the one who seeks only the applause of nail-scarred hands. For that person, the cultivation of reputation carries no value.

Leadership is Transformation

My years in various leadership positions are a study in transformation. I came into so many of them with a wrong set of expectations, values and ideas about Christian leadership. I was not thirsty for power or obsessed with the trappings of leadership, but I also was not seeking to be a leader of no reputation, nor was I responding to the call to be a servant *first*.

And it was here that I was wrong.

I used to reject the notion that good Christian leaders were only those who were brought kicking and screaming into the position, and that anyone who wanted to be a president or CEO or superintendent or executive director should be automatically disqualified. I still reject some aspects of this as not entirely in keeping with our giftedness and our desires. However, the truth in this view is that steward leaders are godly stewards first, and it is as godly stewards that they are called to lead.

When Jesus is singularly and absolutely Lord of our life, we seek to be like him and him only. That is our sole calling. We are called to our work, and that work carries God's anointing. We are called to decrease that Christ may increase. We are called to *be* the people of God before and as we *do* the work of God. And we are called to pray and look for the miracle of leadership that God may work in our midst.

In these ways, in responding faithfully to this calling and striving after these ideals at the cost of everything else that may tempt us, we become steward leaders. And as we do, we will be transformed into the likeness of Christ, becoming leaders of no reputation.

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¹David McCullough, *John Adams* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001), p. 19.

²Robert K. Greenleaf, *The Servant as Leader* (Westfield, Ind.: Greenleaf Center, 1970), p. 7.

³Among the many authors who are championing the cause of careful self-awareness are James O'Toole, Stephen Covey, Noel Tichy, John Kotter, Peter Block, Warren Bennis, Max De Pree and Peter Drucker.

R. Scott Rodin (PhD, University of Aberdeen) is managing principal of OneAccord NFP, and Senior Fellow of the Engstrom Institute. He has served as president of the Christian Stewardship Association and president of Eastern Baptist (now Palmer) Theological Seminary. He is the author of five books, including *Stewards in the Kingdom*.



Practice What You Preach

Elaine Hagele

*Vice President for Finance
Mid-America Union Conference
Lincoln, Nebraska*



Elaine Hagele is the vice president for Finance of the Mid-America Union that serves six conferences throughout nine states in the heart of the United States. She served with her husband, Lowell, in diverse places including Guam, Japan, and the United States, and has audited in four divisions for the General Conference Auditing Service. She received her education in diverse places: elementary education in Canada—her birth country, secondary education in India, and college education in the United States. Her service has been diverse: serving in union financial leadership since 2006 after serving as associate, doing both financial and trust audits as a CPA, and teaching diverse subjects—Accounting, Living Skills, and English—interspersed with being full-time mother to three now-grown sons.

Long before text messaging was even dreamed of, I learned a valuable string of letters that my sisters and I used frequently to remind each other of an important principle. I was five or six years old—not yet in school. I could already read a lot of words, but spelling was not yet included in my pre-school activities. In our cold attic bedroom, where we three little girls huddled under warm blankets, my big sister taught us the magic letters, P.W.Y.P and the valuable concept they represented.

Even as little children we understood the principle, “Practice what you preach.” We codified it to P.W.Y.P. When I urged my little sister to share more willingly, her reply was, “P.W.Y.P.” When big sister told me to hurry up and help with the dishes, my reply was, “P.W.Y.P.” As we dealt with broader family issues and our lives expanded to extended society issues, we often used the mantra among ourselves, “P.W.Y. P.” In committees and conversations these letters still flash in my mind and I use them to evaluate personal and corporate actions.

Church Leaders as Stewards

Our stewardship as church leaders is so much more than our faithfulness in tithes and our generosity in offerings. Regularly we pray in boardrooms for the Holy Spirit to speak to us and to guide our decisions and how often instead of listening to the Spirit’s promptings we listen to the voices of special interest groups. Too often we let what others might think of us, or how others might react to our decisions control our decisions, rather than being controlled by the Holy Spirit. Our church members are influenced more by what they see in our use of God’s assets than by all our thoughtful and powerful stewardship programs.

Now I get personal. Sometimes I have even wondered how some church leaders will handle God’s final review of their workers’ expense reports. Even though the expenses may be allowable by policy, I have wondered if they were the most prudent use of God’s money. Thankfully, I am neither the Judge nor the Holy Spirit, but each of us as God’s stewards will have a day of accounting for our use of His assets.

Accountability

Besides considering how God sees our stewardship, we also need to consider our duty to our givers. Our first accountability is to God. Then we are also accountability to those who have entrusted their means to our stewardship. We, as leaders have a duty of transparency. In the United States, leaders are controlled by the “Uniform Prudent Investor Act.” Though other countries may have different laws, the general concept is universal. In the global church our leaders have an even higher responsibility—to be prudent users of God’s means entrusted to us. Prudent users have to think wisely and consider their responsibility to others. We need to discriminate between what may be good uses and what are the best uses of that for which we are accountable.

Our stewardship programs are important, but it is much more important how we live stewardship.

Among the practical tools that we use here in the SAD, two of these stand out: SES (Spiritual Enrichment Seminar) and the Financial Diagnosis. The SES is a short, medium and long-term program devoted to the promotion of spirituality. It aims to bring every member to develop and solidify the habit of seeking God in the first hour of every morning. We dedicate 40 days to developing the habit and 180 days to solidifying it. Every two years we change the emphasis, in response to feedback, and work toward further deepening the spiritual foundation.



The financial diagnosis is a practical, simple and highly productive project. It aims to educate and pledge those who already have a stable and habitual relationship with God. Churches who have already participated in the SES, make their own diagnosis and based on this experience establish their objectives, goals and strategies aiming to achieve their preferred outcome. All regular members are analyzed by the stewardship committee, seeking to identify the frequency (not numbers) with which they worship God. They are placed in various groups: those who have income and are systematic in their tithes and offerings; those who have income, but are not systematic, those who do not possess revenue, etc. Based on this diagnosis, the objectives and goals are outlined for the next 12 months and the actions will be implemented to reach the expected results.

These work fronts, allied with other actions, have helped us bring the church to experience a larger habitual search for God and a financial growth never before seen in our division: over a 100% average in the last five years. Leading the people of God, resources will come naturally; a consecrated church will be a generous and systematically faithful church.

—Miguel Costa Pinheiro, Stewardship Director, South American Division

Best practices for conducting stewardship ministry seminars/workshops that I have identified, which facilitate transfer of information/knowledge, are drawn from the field of education.



First, we must think about how people think. How do people learn? Based on the work of Anthony Gregorc we know that (a) some prefer concrete examples and objects rather than theories and abstractions—they follow step-by-step directions well; (b) others prefer guidelines with minimal structure, and are not prone to follow directions carefully; (c) yet there are others who prefer to deal with abstractions via models, ideas, concepts, and symbols—they read better and listen to lectures better; and there is a final category who prefer concrete application of ideas through example and practice—they are trial and error learners who dislike step by step-by-step procedures (Gregorc, 1982. *An Adult's Guide to Style*). Our seminars need to cater to different styles of learners.

Secondly, people do not work alone, so should they be expected to learn alone how to work? In order to ensure effectiveness in transfer of information/knowledge to a field/organization, more than one representative from a field/organization ought to be participants at a seminar.

Thirdly, seminars/workshops need learning structures if learning and subsequent transfer are to take place. There are content free structures associated with cooperative learning that are effective in seminars, such as *think-pair-share* (or square). Each participant is allowed to think about an idea/concept/method/practice, afterwards the participants are paired, then each pair (or square—four) of participants share their thoughts (William H. Green, Rita Henriquez-Green, Larry Burton, & Tim Green, 2003. *Pedagogical Foundations of Education*). The participants may be grouped according to the constituent areas they represent to ensure intentional and purposeful transfer of information/knowledge.

This matter of transfer of information/learning needs to be given due attention; if not, our investments in this area will not reap the desired dividends. The best practices highlighted in this document constitute valuable insights for Stewardship seminars and workshops.

—James F. Daniel, Associate Stewardship Director, Inter-American Division

As a stewardship leader of my division, there are at least three best practices that I have incorporated in my role of responsibilities. First, as much as possible, we conduct stewardship meetings in a district level, so more church members can come and receive the lessons that we want to share with them. I also encourage our counterparts in the union, mission and conference to do the same. Second, as a leader, we have to be an example in our faith and practice stewardship in front of our members by sharing our personal testimonies as we hold our seminars. Third, we are also a steward. As we teach our members to be more generous to God's work and other people around us, we must practice generosity to those with whom we are performing our role of leadership. By being an example, we are following Jesus' footsteps and the results are wonderful.



—Wendell Mandolang, Stewardship Director, Southern Asia-Pacific Division

A practice that I have followed over the years is to give a biblically based and very spiritual sermon on tithing for the worship service. I conclude with a personal testimony on tithing and how God has blessed our family. Then I make an appeal for each person to consider being financially faithful with God and to be a part of a covenant relationship with Him. Almost every hand goes up! And because of the spiritual focus of the worship hour, most of the worship attendees will come back for the afternoon meetings. We conclude the service by singing #100 in the *SDA* hymnal, “Great is Thy Faithfulness.” Many in the audience will have tears in their eyes as they contemplate the sermon and the words of the hymn. Many express appreciation for the message and tell me that they have recommitted themselves to God.



—G. Edward Reid, Former Stewardship Director, North American Division

An African proverb imparts my philosophy of stewardship education. “If you want to go fast, you run alone; if you want to walk far, you go with others.” To implement this philosophy, I embrace John Maxwell’s mentoring model:



Action—Result

I do it—I model

I do it and you are with me—I mentor

You do it and I am with you—I monitor

You do it—you move forward

You do it and someone is with you—we multiply

—Kigundu Ndwiga, Former Stewardship Director, East Central Africa Division

It is called “better practices” when we incorporate business strategies that recognized companies have implemented with proven positive results. The specialists identify these better practices by examining the commercial processes of successful companies, and then extracting the reasons for the good economic performance of the company. In 1 Thessalonians 5:21 we read, “Test all things, hold fast what is good.”



The Christian life is a spiritual enterprise. The main objective is to obtain positive results in terms of spirituality. If businessmen look for economic growth, then we Christians look for spiritual growth. We are speaking of pure stewardship, because spiritual Christians are those who soon become faithful stewards. In other words, spirituality is the foundation of fidelity.

What then are the best practices that other Christians have used to develop their spiritual life? If these practices have worked for them, then they are also good for us. Following are some examples:

John Wesley spent the first three hours of the day in prayer and the study of the Scriptures. What was the result? He wrote more than 230 books; and, who can doubt the power of His ministry?

Adoniram Judson did the same two or three hours daily. What was the result? He took the gospel to pagan Burma, and translated the Bible from English to Burmese.

Martin Luther prayed three hours daily. What was the result? He is the father of the Protestant Reformation, and translator of the Bible into German, turning it into the first most circulated book in history.

Carlos Spurgeon prayed and studied several hours of the day. What was the result? He published 3,561 sermons and for that reason he is called “the prince of preachers.”

Jonathan Edwards prayed five times a day. What was the result? He initiated a spiritual revival that extended to all the colonies of the United States.

John Bunyan, a tinsmith, prayed and studied his Bible several hours of the day. What was the result? In addition to other books, he wrote the *Pilgrim’s Progress*. The book has the next greatest circulation after the Bible.

The positive results in the lives of these men prove that prayer and study of the Bible works. Persecuted for his preaching, Bunyan was incarcerated for more than twelve years. He was so near to God through prayer and Bible study that he wished for more trials so that the consolation he received from his life of prayer and study of the Word would be increased.

Yes, it works! Test it! And what will be the result in your life?

—Javier Mejia Mejia, Stewardship Director, Inter-American Division

We are called to be happy in Christ. There are thousands of reasons for this. God has done and still continues to do everything on His part for us that we might be people of hope and happiness. What is our response? God wants our relationships, trust and dedicated service. Everything begins and ends with relationships in family, church, and society. As a people, we need a constant relationship with Him. It will evoke trust in God, change our character, and ennoble our habits.

God reveals His plans concerning everyone of us. He wants to see us involved in a devoted service. He invites us to trust Him when He uses us in the most unusual way. Living in complete freedom, let us not forget that God knows best what we need and what will benefit us. Let us make no resistance to His plan and His purposes.

A man planted an olive tree and started to pray: "Lord, send rain to my little tree." And God sent rain to the earth. The tree got enough water and the man continued to pray. "But now Lord please send a lot of sun because my little tree needs warmth." And God sent the sun. The tree grew up. The man continued to pray: "Lord, send please a light frost to strengthen its roots and branches." God sent frost and . . . the tree died. The man got upset very much. He approached his friend to tell him his story and to share his sorrow. "Look, I also have an olive tree," his friend answered. His tree grew very well. "But I prayed in another way. I said to God that He is the Creator of this little tree and he knows better what it really needs. I just ask God to take care of it and He does it."

This also relates to us. We often ask for those things which in our opinion we need. But only God knows what we really need. Let us completely trust Him. In this time of materialism, cruelty, betrayal, money-grabbing, loss of interest in God's service, and self-sacrifice, let us look for a better relationship with Him. Trust God in all circumstances and be involved in a dedicated, continuous service to God. He is waiting. He knows everything and He will make everything work in the best way for you and me.

—Paul Liberansky, Stewardship Director, Euro-Asia Division

God-centered Living Results in God-centered Giving. Several months ago I was browsing through some stewardship materials and read a phrase that approximates these words. Ever since then, the linkage of God-centered living and God-centered giving has become my "mantra" regarding stewardship. And it's not just a phrase—I have seen it demonstrated in real life.

A pastor I know came to a new church and said nothing from the pulpit about tithing or stewardship for the first two years. Instead, his sermons focused on commitment to Christ and His power, along with the necessity of allowing our old human nature to die at the foot of the cross. And the truth is, only after we experience this transformation are we able to experience the joy of God-centered Giving. When this pastor finally preached about the various aspects of stewardship, including tithing, it was amazing to observe the response over time from the members. As the conference treasurer, I saw the tithe markedly increase. And the local church budget has remained in the black. The difference? God-centered living results in God-centered giving! Naturally, I tend to think of ways to encourage financial giving.

In September, designated as Stewardship Month, we encourage our pastors to preach at least one sermon on stewardship. This magazine, *Dynamic Steward*, is shared among our churches, especially those led by lay leaders. *The Stewpot*, a monthly publication from the Pacific Union, is e-mailed to all our church bulletin secretaries across the conference. The *Faith and Finance* materials from the Stewardship Department of the North American Division have been provided to all our pastors. And a stewardship report is included with each issue of our conference newsletter, *The Alyeskan*.

As a way of reminding our donors that their funds really do make a difference, we print near the bottom of each tax-deductible receipt a brief "Praise Point," a little news item about how the Lord is blessing in our conference in terms of outreach into various communities across Alaska. For me, the ultimate value of stewardship is the "God-centered" part of "God-centered giving." While it is certainly true that every dollar given to God through His church has an impact in terms of outreach into our communities through evangelism, influences for good within our own families through our educational system and so many, many other spiritual benefits, the real deal of giving to our Father through His church is the "God-centered" element.

Even though we frequently read stories of people who were blessed financially because of their returning part of the monetary gifts with which God has entrusted them, stewardship is not some sort of slot machine, dispensing blessings when our proverbial quarters go *ka-ching* into its innards!

The real blessings, the blessings that remind us that we are His and that He loves us with an everlasting love, is that joyous privilege of sensing, as we open every single area of our life to Him, that we are linked with Him now and forever!

—Sharon Staddon, Vice President for Finance, Alaska Conference



World Projection for Stewardship Ministries

*Mario Niño, MSPH
Associate Director
GC Stewardship Ministries
World Headquarters*



The 2010 General Conference Session held in Atlanta, Georgia, brought change to the Stewardship Ministries leadership team with the appointment of Mario Niño as the new Associate Director for the department. Mario has a vast experience in the field of stewardship leadership. He served as the stewardship division director for the Inter-American Division for fifteen years. Mario and his wife, Raquel, have three adult children.

As a world church we have different cultures, languages and ethnic groups, but we are united by one God, one church, one mission and the Holy Scriptures. This allows us to have a cohesive program in every division, and gives direction to the world church. In order to share the vision and mission of the Stewardship Ministries and give inspiration and formation to leadership, there are five windows that represent the framework for understanding stewardship in the concept of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

These five windows are:

1. The PHILOSOPHY of Stewardship. The philosophy explains when, why, and how the stewardship ministries came into existence.
2. The HISTORY of Stewardship. The history traces the different moments since the creation of these ministries.
3. The THEOLOGY of Stewardship. The theology explains what stewardship is about and what the guidelines of the Lord are.
4. The METHODOLOGY of Stewardship. The methodology defines the different strategies to reach the objectives.
5. The ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE of Stewardship. The organizational structure describes the human resources that are necessary for the implementation of plans, programs, and projects to go through the different levels of the church.

This edition of the *Dynamic Steward* is dealing with the methodology of stewardship. During the past fifteen years that I worked in the Inter-American Division, we promoted a program oriented to training leaders in the local church through the Biblical Stewardship Institute (BSI). The Institute offered different seminars during the weekend. In the first module we concentrated on three seminars:

1. The Theology of Stewardship
2. How to Study the Bible
3. How to Preach About Stewardship

The first seminar gives the fundamentals in a theocentric stewardship. For many years we have been promoting stewardship with an ecclesio-centric emphasis. The focus has been the church and the mission of the church. There is nothing wrong with this emphasis; however, in 1994 the General Conference Stewardship Summit recommended to change the emphasis to a theocentric focus. That means, God is the center of our life, our church, our mission and is or should be the center of all. It is putting the emphasis on the Lord of the church, in contrast to the church of the Lord.

In the second seminar we explore the Word of God from the perspective of the Hebrew culture, language and experience. We compare the Hebrew Bible with the Christian Bible.

Thirdly, we present the seminar, “How to Preach About Stewardship.” Not everyone likes to preach about stewardship and some do not know how to do this. Consequently, when you put together the three seminars, it will become easy to preach, because you will now know the theology, you will know how to explore the Holy Word, and when you get a message, you will be prepared to preach as soon as the opportunity arises. The Biblical Stewardship Institute requires a budget, instructors, textbooks, and a syllabus. The results are excellent. I strongly recommend this strategy to any division in the world because there is a need and it is our responsibility to provide solutions for these needs. May the Lord guide His church in these times, when a call for spiritual revival and reformation is our duty and our responsibility.

What does "normal" look like?

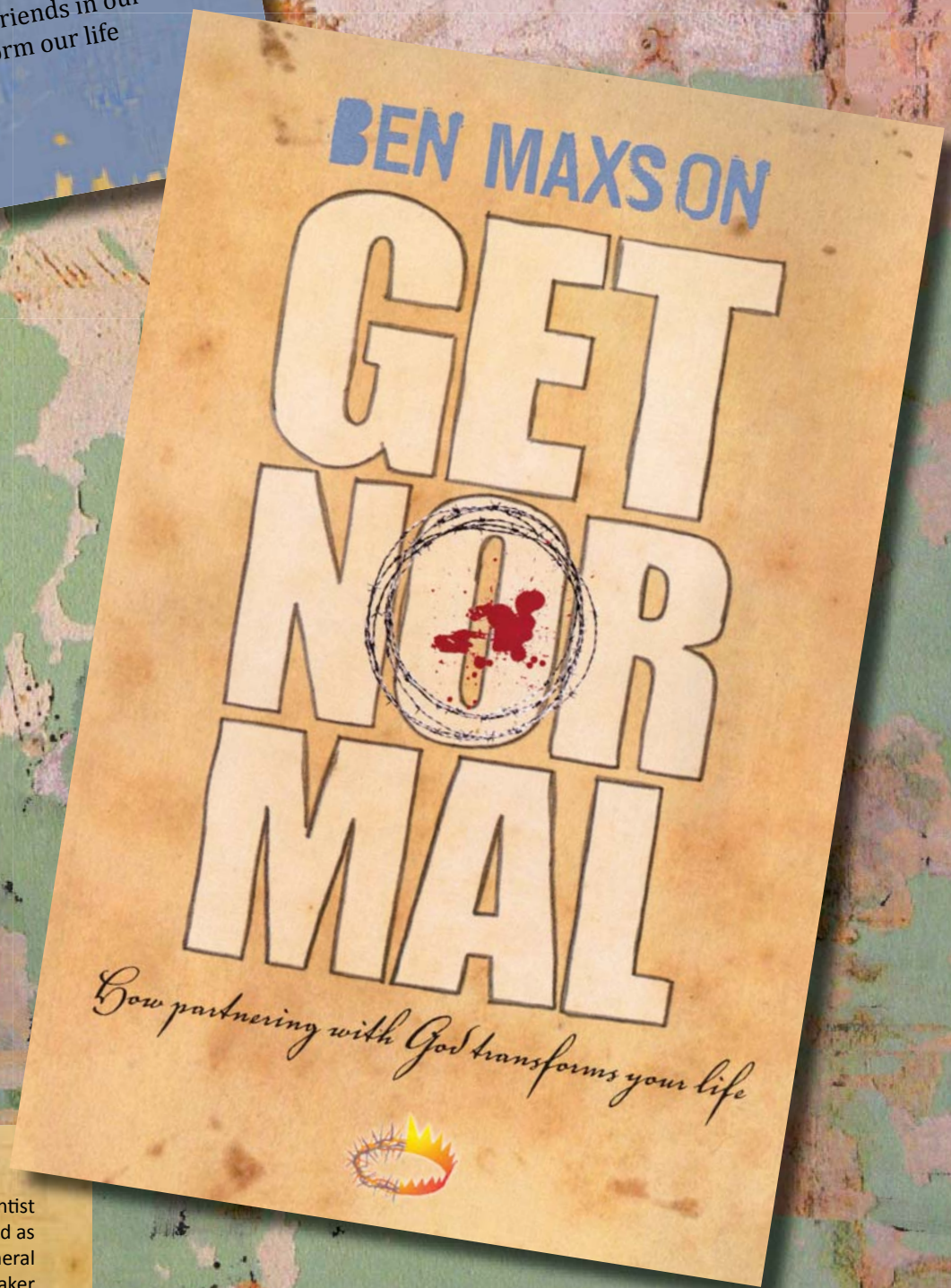
Think back to how God created us in His image—
that's normal.

We were created to live as friends of God, partnering
with Him as stewards of the world He had created—
that's normal.

We were designed to live life in partnership with God,
like Enoch, Abraham, David and Paul—
that's normal.

God wants us to live as His partner-friends in our
lives today in a way that will transform our life
and our world—that's normal.

GET NORMAL!



Dr. Ben Maxson is pastor of the Paradise Adventist Church in Paradise, California, USA. He has worked as a department director for stewardship at the General Conference and continues to be a regular speaker around the world on discipleship, stewardship and partnering with God.

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