

DYNAMIC Steward

living • submitting • abiding • giving

April-June, 2012

Talented by God

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**What is *your*
influence?**

DYNAMIC Steward



My all in response to God's all!

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inside ds

We live in a world that increasingly reminds us of our limitations which often prompts a sense of hopelessness and despair. We are told that our families are dysfunctional, our education is inadequate and that our relationships are based on selfishness. Some label us as being too conservative or too liberal or, at times, too indecisive. We can be criticized for being too outspoken or too shy about expressing our personal convictions. New thoughts are not welcome, we are told, because if they were true they would have already been known. It really doesn't matter what color, size or what our nationality is because, eventually, we will be a minority in some crowd and criticized because of our association with others who appear to be like us. We are positioned and conditioned to be losers by others who have been made to feel the same. The vicious cycle continues and is perpetuated. Affirmations of others who may live differently in some respect than we do is discouraged. Eventually we will be convinced, act like and even believe that we are indeed losers. Is there any hope for breaking this cycle of put-downs while living in a world filled with such negativity? Yes, there is! It is found in a simple formula of "1 + 3 = Hope & Possibility." We may be the "1" but we have the full recognition and support of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We have the "winner's edge!"



Larry R. Evans
Associate Director,
GC Stewardship
Ministries

"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ . . . And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us" (Rom. 5:1,5 NIV). We are winners in Christ! We can have peace and hope even in a negative world. But the good news does not stop here. Each of us has been given an influence to make a difference in the lives of others. Each of us has been given a starter-package of talents by which we can bring hope into the world even for the most hopeless. But we must remember what it is that empowers our talents and gives our influence a convincing power in such a negative world. "Our power is not in our talents of education or means, neither is it in our popularity; it is in self-sacrifice, our willing obedience to Jesus Christ. Those who truly surrender all to Him, will carry a weight of influence, and will carry others along with them, because they walk in the light. Brain power will be inefficient, purse power of little account with God; but heart power, thorough godliness, humble fidelity, will bear a weight of influence that will be irresistible" (E.G. White in *Sons and Daughters of God*, p.236).

In this issue of the *Dynamic Steward* we will be challenged to reconsider how we use the gifts of talent and influence that have been entrusted to us. With Christ we do have the winner's edge, but how we use our gifts is up to us. We can make a difference! The world is waiting, but more importantly, so is our Maker and Savior.

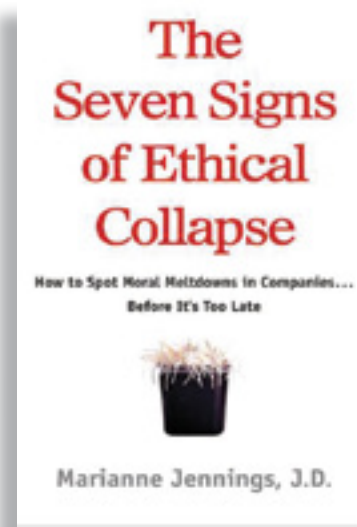
Editor

resources

Thirty years of study and research and here you have it, a book that pulls together decades of scandal for an “Ah-ha!” moment. The next big step in ethics, compliance, and creating a culture of integrity is focusing on prevention. We know ethics missteps when we see them, but are there ways to prevent them? Learn the common threads – all unethical companies are alike. Learn the warning signs and the fixes. Help is here. No more blaming rogues as we learn to control their mischief. Professor Marianne Jennings is an emeritus professor of legal and ethical studies in business from the W.P. Carey School of Business at Arizona State University, having retired in 2011 after 35 years of teaching there. She continues to teach graduate courses in business ethics at colleges and universities around the United States.

Marianne has been married since 1976 to Terry H. Jennings, Maricopa County Attorney’s Office Deputy County Attorney. Together they have five children: Sarah, Sam, and John, and the late Claire and Hannah Jennings.

***The Seven Signs of Ethical Collapse*, by Marianne Jennings, J.D.**
Available at: www.mariannejennings.com

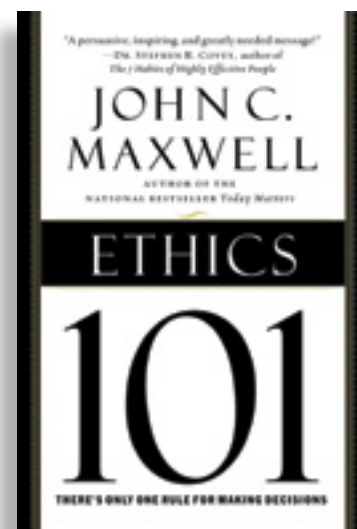


How does a person judge what is ethical? Sometimes it’s clear. You know Enron’s leaders were in the wrong. But is it always easy to see where the line is in your own life? What’s the standard? And will it apply in all situations?

John C. Maxwell thinks it can. When the New York Times best-selling author, successful businessman, and former pastor was asked about his thoughts on business ethics, his response was, “There’s no such thing. There’s only ethics.” Maxwell asserts that there’s one ethical standard for all behavior. And you might be surprised by what it’s based on. Did you know that a variation of the Golden Rule exists in every major religion?

In his book, *Ethics 101*, Maxwell shows how people can live with integrity by using the Golden Rule as their standard—regardless of religion, culture, or circumstances. Along the way, he delves into the desires of the human heart, reveals the five most common causes that get people off track ethically, and teaches how to develop the “Midas touch” when it comes to integrity.

***ETHICS 101*, by John C. Maxwell. This book is available for purchase at www.johnmaxwell.com**

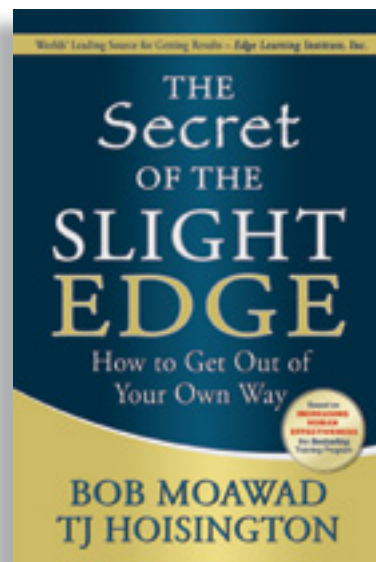


This book offers powerful principles and inspirational stories to help people overcome obstacles and achieve their goals. You will learn that your thoughts play a central role in what you achieve and that having the ‘right attitude’ is everything. You will also discover what drives motivation, what’s the role of talent (and is it overrated?), how to increase your self-esteem, and more. Making a slight change in your daily thoughts and actions is the first step to getting you out of your own way!

Bob Moawad is the former Chairman and Founder of Edge Learning Institute, Inc. Before his passing in 2007, Bob had shared his insights in over 8,550 presentations worldwide to audiences ranging from 50 to 23,000 people. From the front lines of American education to the boardrooms of some of the nation’s most prestigious Fortune 500 companies, he has inspired millions of people.

TJ Hoisington is the author of the international bestselling book, *If You Think You Can! Thirteen Laws that Govern the Performance of High Achievers*. As an authority on high performance, TJ has advised, addressed, or consulted with many organizations, including Fortune 500 companies, U.S. Armed Forces and nonprofit organizations.

***The Secret of the Slight Edge*, by Bob Moawad and TJ Hoisington.**
Order your copy at: www.GreatnessWithin.com/slightedge.html



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Talents—God's Gifts



Erika F. Puni
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She was a true original and a talent beyond compare” (CNN Online News, February 11). This was Quincy Jones (American music producer) reaction to the sudden and unexpected death (accidental drowning) of Whitney Houston (legendary pop singer) on Saturday, February 11, 2012. Another great American singer and songwriter, Lionel Richie, told CNN that Whitney “had a voice that could just turn on a story, a melody into magical notes.” Reverend DeForest B. Soaries Jr, senior pastor at First Baptist Church of Lincoln Gardens in Somerset, New Jersey, and a friend of Whitney, remembered her rehearsal with a choir back in 1977 when Whitney was only 14. He said, “This child had invoked a level of divine inspiration that involved the kind of joyous tears and emotional shouts that were characteristics of the black religious experience. Not only did Whitney’s singing completely transform the atmosphere, but it was clear to everyone in that rehearsal that they were in the presence of an unusual talent and that they were eyewitness to a superstar taxiing on the runway of success and fame” (CNN Opinion: “The Whitney Houston I Knew,” February 13).

So Whitney Houston had an angelic voice and a “talent beyond compare,” but what is a talent? A talent is a natural and unique ability instilled into ones being by God in His act of creation. This deed of sharing something of Himself with us is expressed well in the Genesis account: “So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” Genesis 1:27 (NIV). Talents come to us as a gift of His grace at birth, and every human person (Christian or non-Christian) born into this world is endowed with a set of special skills and abilities. For Christians, however, these manifestations of God’s creativity and love are given so we can serve and minister to people everywhere while giving Him, our Creator and Maker, the glory (I Corinthians 10:31).

Can talents be refined, improved, and developed to extraordinary quality over time? The answer is yes, and the singing voice of Whitney was a powerful example of a talent that was trained and coached well. Clive Davis, music producer and Whitney’s mentor for more than 25 years noted, “I saw a depth and a range and soul ... that rarely ranks at the top level. And that’s why we’ve been working together ever since” (Davis on CNN’s “Piers Morgan Tonight,” February 9, 2012). But as pointed out earlier, a talent is, first and foremost a God-given ability; and it is given to a person as a “perfect” gift of the Creator (James 1:17). On its own, any talent is extraordinary; and when used and applied at any given time in one’s life, it comes across as a “natural” and normal part of their being. Nevertheless, every talent like any human skill has the potential for further refinement and improvement. This aspect of development and management is an expression of Christian stewardship.

Can a talent lose its shine, effectiveness, and intended impact? Unfortunately, the answer is also a yes. For Whitney, her smoking and use of drugs affected her ability to reach those high notes that used to make her voice one-of-a-kind. The standard of excellence that she set herself in her rendition of the national anthem at the 1991 Super Bowl, or the soundtrack hit “I will always love you” from the movie “The Bodyguard” (1992) was no longer there when she embarked on a comeback Australian tour in February 2010. Her once clean image of a girl with a pristine voice was now tarnished because of an undesirable lifestyle. Perhaps a lesson that we can all learn from the sad ending of Whitney’s life is that we, as followers of Christ, need to value, and take care of, our God given talents.

Can a talent be a “spiritual gift” as well? Absolutely! In terms of one’s “gift-mix,” all gifts (talents, acquired skills, and spiritual gifts) come from God, and as such it is possible that a talent may be used by God in a given time and place to compliment the needs of ministry. But unlike spiritual gifts which are received as part of the blessings of conversion, talents are received at the time of one’s natural birth. While a talent (e.g. a voice for singing) may stay with a person for life, their spiritual gifts may vary from time to time and given as additional skills for a specific purpose and service. The end purpose for both talents and spiritual gifts, however, is meant to be the same: to minister to others and to bring glory to God.

As Christian stewards, we recognize that life and giftedness, as expressed in people’s natural abilities, acquired skills, and spiritual gifts, are measures of God’s

grace given freely because of His unconditional love and mercies. As gifts of grace they are not given for self-exaltation or personal praise, but granted to us to be used in service to humanity and in extending the boundaries of God's Kingdom on earth. Along with the privilege of receiving these gifts comes the responsibility of developing them to the full, and using them in the process of making disciples, while giving glory to Him who is worthy of our praise. But when we fail to use our talents, or when we abuse or misuse these blessings, we can lose them forever.

stewardship window

news from the
director's desk ...



Larry Evans, Associate Director for GC Stewardship Ministries presents to participants at the Northern Caribbean University, Jamaica.

Nearly two hundred participants attended the K.V. Vaz Lecture Series 2012 sponsored by the Northern Caribbean University (NCU), Jamaica, on its Mandeville campus, on Thursday, March 15, 2012. Faculty and students from the School of Religion and Theology, pastors from three Conferences, and special guests from other Christian denominations, made up this number.

The day's program was focused on the topic, "Christian Stewardship: The Answer to the Economic Crisis," with the main presentations delivered by Erika Puni, Director, and Larry Evans, Associate Director, of the General Conference Stewardship Ministries Department. The titles presented were: "Is the Address of your Church 'Wall Street?'" "What is Christian Stewardship, Anyway?" "The Four Beasts That Can Devour Faithful Stewardship," and "The Answer at the Deep Level."

This event was a joint-initiative of the Jamaican Union Conference (Inter-American Division) Stewardship Ministries and the University, targeting ministerial students, field pastors as well as stewardship professionals and educators. In the words of the Jamaican Union president, Everett Brown, who is also Chairman of the Board of Governors for NCU and who was in attendance at the symposium, these were "excellent presentations needed by the University and the Union."

interview

The Gateway To Service



Weymouth Spence, President: Washington Adventist University



Dr. Spence is from May Pen, Jamaica. He is proudly the product of an Adventist home and education. He holds degrees in Science and Education, including a doctoral degree in Vocational/Technical/Occupational Education from Nova Southeastern University in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. He married Rebecca Brown. They have two children and two grandchildren.

As a Christian leader, Spence has enjoyed more than 35 years of progressive advancement in leadership roles in higher education and healthcare organizations.

Weymouth Spence leads a Christian university located just outside the capital of the United States. Larry Evans, Editor of the *Dynamic Steward* and Associate Director of GC Stewardship Ministries, explores with him some of the challenges and opportunities related to developing the potential of his students. Washington Adventist University is experiencing its largest enrollment and is listed among the top 50 colleges in the northern part of the United States.

LRE: As I visit your campus I notice that there's a sign that says, "The Gateway to Service." What does that sign mean to you as the university president?

WS: It is significant. I think the early leadership of this institution recognized that, as a church, we prepare young people for a type of ministry that is vital to society. What we have done is to hard-wire the idea of "The Gateway to Service" into the life of this campus. It highlights service to our community and to the world. When students get here, we not only prepare them to be outstanding nurses and accountants and teachers and more; we also prepare them for moral leadership that can be taken back into their own communities. This can be done regardless of one's background. This is a real need in society today. That's why it is so important that we designate two days out of the academic year where we close down the university. Our students, faculty, and staff go out into the community to provide service in nursing homes, animal farms and soup kitchens. The faculty is strongly supportive and participate along side the students in these community projects.

LRE: The university's location places it at the crossroads of international attention. Is this factored into the schools' curriculum?

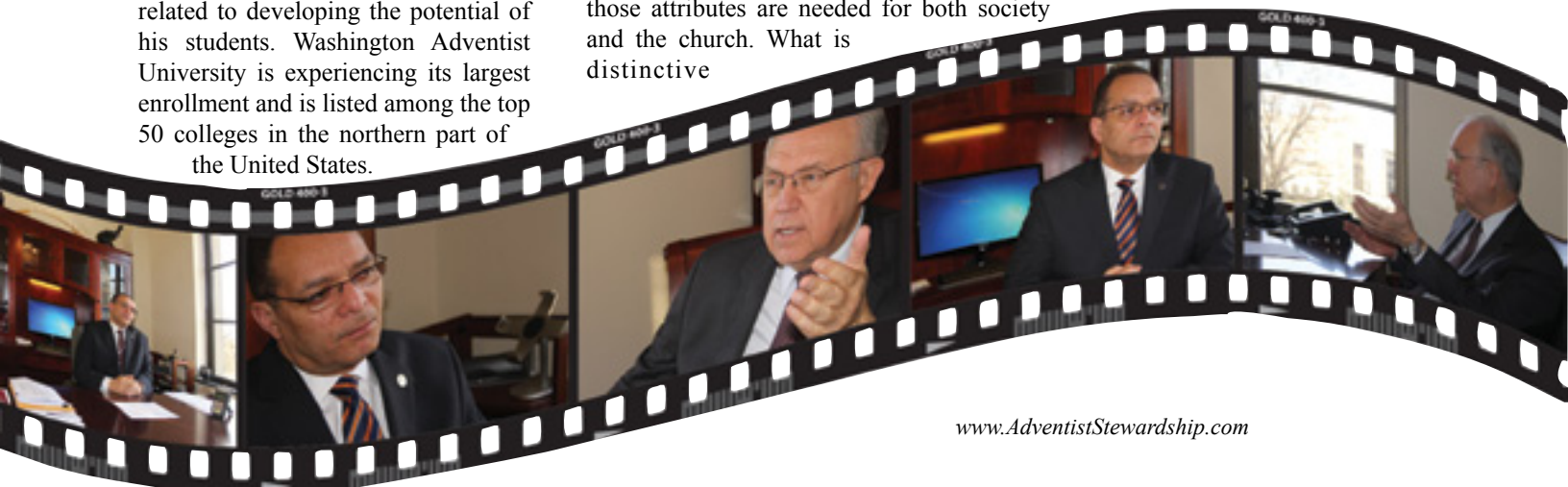
WS: It is definitely woven into our curriculum. As a matter of fact, our strategic plan is built utilizing the environment so we can minister to society. For example, our radio station, WGTS, plays Christian music. It is often said that in the Pentagon they are listening to WGTS. It is in the top 10 Christian radio stations listened to in the United States.

LRE: There are many talented individuals living in this area. While your university is dedicated to building talents how do you relate talents to the development of spiritual gifts, or is there a difference?

WS: One of my first actions here at the university was to hire a vice president of ministry. Before, we had a chaplain, and the focus was on students. However, the entire university community needs to blend faith and learning into one whole. This blending links spirituality with the talents. Let me give you an example. We have the Acro-air, which is our gymnastic team. They have outstanding talents in tumbling but they use their skills as a way of extending our spiritual mission. For example, when they do the half-time program for the Wizards (Washington's basketball team) or when they travel, home and abroad, they help promote a drug-free environment. By doing this they convey to other youth the benefits of being drug-free.

LRE: Do you anticipate your graduates serving both church and society?

WS: Our vision is to prepare competent graduates with moral leadership and those attributes are needed for both society and the church. What is distinctive



about us is that our accountants and nurses also have a spiritual base for moral leadership and service. When an employer hires one of our nurses they will receive not only a competent nurse but also someone who will serve with compassion.

LRE: Do you have ways of incorporating the needs of society into your present curriculum?

WS: We do that in part through arranged internships such as those at the radio station, the local soup-kitchen and various governmental agencies. Just this semester I received an e-mail from the White House asking if we have students who would like to intern there. The needs of the community enhance the development of the competencies we teach but they also provide the opportunity to link service with the development of academic competencies.

LRE: When it comes to bringing out the best in a student, what personal qualities do you look for in a professor?

WS: Within our value system we look at competence in the discipline, but along with that we have a requirement that each professor, each employee of this institution, model the life and teachings of Jesus. They may not actually teach about the life and teachings of Jesus, but we do ask them to model it. This helps convey the compassion and a knowledge base of what a Christian ought to be like.

LRE: It has been said by one author, “We are born to win and conditioned to lose.” How does a Christian university bring the best out of its students so they can keep the winner’s edge?

WS: When some of our students arrive, they don’t think they can be successful. Some have no idea what they want to do in life. Previously they may not have had a good experience in school, or a good role model at home. We work to help create a positive environment while they attend this university. We tell our students that it’s very likely that this class will graduate together and together you will take your place in society. Learning to work together now is an important value for us. The university has, therefore, developed a support system within our dormitories, cafeteria, student life and the classroom to support student-success. Our retention or graduation rate is a way we measure our success. For us, Christian education means developing competencies within the student’s chosen field but to also prepare the student to be able to apply their learning to a society that may not always be friendly to their endeavors.

LRE: Our world has been brought to the brink of financial disaster. In the news of late, greed and selfishness have been exposed as dominating influences behind much of the chaos. Often those guilty of this are those with the brightest minds and who have graduated from highly respected universities. What’s missing?

WS: This brings us right back to the motto of “Gateway to Service.” We’re preparing students not for self-promotion but for serving others. We want them to understand that their legacy in life is not the dollars they earn or the homes they live in, but how well they impact others. That’s really the key. It is from that point that I believe the world has deviated. Our blessings and talents don’t stop with us. They are for others as well. The greatest satisfaction I receive is when a graduate reaches out and impacts others. It’s not that it is wrong for our business students to become rich or wealthy; that may happen, but it is what they do with that wealth and those riches that matters. That difference can begin here with a Christian education. Using one’s talents for others is clearly part of a Christian’s stewardship.

LRE: By the time some students arrive on your campus, it may be that they’ve made some pretty poor choices over time. What hope do they have in turning their life around?

WS: There’s great hope. As the saying goes, “Where there’s life, there’s hope.” Our university is designed to be part of that hope. Our advising team is here to guide them and the Christian environment helps provide the setting for turning one’s life around. If the students are willing—not only motivated but willing—to do what is necessary, we will supply the zeal and the power and whatever it takes to help them become successful. But they have a key role to play. Too often there is a tendency to be independent and try to go out alone. Oftentimes in life, however, we need to come to a point where we reach out to others and show a sense of interdependence if we are to succeed. This is also true of divine help.

LRE: After spending your life with youth, how much confidence do you have for the future?

WS: I’m very confident about the future. And you’re correct—I spent quite a bit of my life with youth. I’ve lived long enough to see them work their way through the system and about taking their places in society and making a difference. That’s what is so encouraging about Christian education. You get to see the rewards of your labor within your lifetime.

LRE: Are we in good hands for the future?

WS: Yes, we’re in good hands for the future! I’ve lived long enough that I can testify that when we partner with the Lord, outstanding things can happen.



Visit:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L2s2q8-yi8w&feature=youtu.be>

www.AdventistStewardship.com

The Shepherd and the Steward...



Stan Patterson
Chair of the Department of Christian Ministry
Associate Professor of Christian Ministry
Andrews University, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Dr. Patterson holds a Ph.D. in Leadership and Administration from Andrews University, after 17 years in pastoral ministry and for 14 years in church administrative leadership in the ministerial and evangelism departments. He and his wife Glenda have four children and six grandchildren.



A Matter of Ownership

Have you ever noticed how emphatically the Good Shepherd claims ownership of the sheep in the narrative of John 10? He “calls his own” (v.3); he brings out his own” (v.4); “I know my sheep...am known by my own” (v.14); “I lay down my life for my sheep” (v.15); and “other sheep I have” (v.16). After reading this narrative there remains absolutely no question about who owns the sheep! This is a collection of expressions from the Good Shepherd that communicates ownership way beyond the commercial level—but passionate personal ownership of something so valuable that he would go to the extreme of giving his life for them. This Shepherd doesn’t simply stand at the door; he is the door (v.7) which means that anyone or anything that seeks to harm his own will have to go through him first. And that is not going to happen! This is ownership strengthened by deep and committed love.

The Risk of Stewardship


This Good Shepherd engages stewards—under-shepherds—to assist in feeding, growing, and nurturing the sheep. This is risky; risky because the only way the steward can effectively serve is for the sheep to learn to associate the steward’s voice with that of the Shepherd. They must assume that the qualities of the steward mirror the qualities of the Shepherd and will follow the steward even as they trustingly follow the Shepherd. The risk is in the assumption: same character, same commitment, and the same love that stands firm even to the point of death. This risk is far greater than the risk posed by the thief who tries to covertly gain entrance to the fold (vss.1, 8) because the thief has to take the sheep by force and is thus limited to one or at the most two which is about all one person could carry away. The steward has the trust of the entire flock.

The Unfaithful Steward

The narrative describes this risk by telling of the unfaithful steward (hireling) (vss. 12, 13) who claims no ownership—only remuneration. The hireling views the sheep as objects at the center of a transactional relationship between himself and the Shepherd. The hireling functions not on the basis of commitment but of compliance that is limited in terms of time, energy, and risk to self. As such the sheep are safe and nurtured only to the extent of the limits he sets on the working relationship with the Shepherd. While watching the sheep which have trustingly followed his voice out to feed, he notices that several wolves have slid their heads cautiously out of the obscurity of the forest to weigh the possibilities and the risk of having mutton for lunch. The hireling quickly weighs his risk (not the sheep’s) and comes to the conclusion that this scenario exceeds his allowable risk and runs—abandons the flock while muttering, “I don’t get paid enough for this!” The sheep are scattered while some are caught and devoured. This is the risk the Good Shepherd assumes when entrusting the sheep to stewards.

The Faithful Steward

John doesn’t record any direct counsel in this tale of the Good Shepherd regarding the qualities of a faithful steward. He allows the wisdom of the greatest storyteller to activate our minds and creativity in building a mental model of the faithful steward. We might conclude that the faithful steward—committed, loving, faithful—is everything that the hireling isn’t, but unfortunately that only takes us



so far. The hireling doesn't own the sheep and neither does the faithful steward. This begs the question whether the faithful steward simply "acts" like an owner and if so, where does the motivation to do so come from? Can the faithful steward sustain the act long enough to be declared bondable because he has demonstrated low-risk behavior as a steward? Will such a steward be able to stand the test when he notices the black, wet muzzles of the wolf pack emerging from the cover of darkness to sniff the scent of the flock? Will his sense of self in the context of a lack of ownership allow him to lay his life on the line for the sheep?

David, the shepherd, demonstrated the passionate committed behavior expected of a faithful under-shepherd in his encounter with the "lion and bear" (1 Sam 17:34-36). The encouragement this story brings is that David does not identify himself as the owner. He engages both predators at great risk to his life in order to save a sheep that was not his own. The important key that we discover in this tale of courage is that David identifies the sheep as "his father's sheep" (v. 34) and thus we discover the motivating factor for his willingness to risk himself for the sheep—he acted like an owner because of his relational identity to his father. The sheep had value because of their value to the father and by extension they became valuable to him.

I experienced this reality as a young man while living and working on our family farm in rural Missouri, USA. While working alone one afternoon in the summer of my 16th year, I heard the frantic barking of dogs coming from the pasture where my father kept his sheep. I immediately acted on my fear that feral dogs were attacking the sheep. I took my rifle in hand and ran toward the sheep only to discover my worst fears; sheep were lying dead and mutilated, some wounded and exhausted. My efforts drove the pack of dogs away but not before they inflicted significant loss among the sheep. At one point a wounded dog attacked me rather than escaping, and that very personal encounter has remained a clear memory these many years later. Another memory that has stayed with me is the flash of thought and regret that ran through my mind when I looked at each of those dead or dying sheep. My father worked so hard to care for our family and my mind calculated every sheep lost by dollar value, which translated to hours of hard work for him. "The commitment to the sheep is found in the relationship to the Father."

The Good Shepherd as Steward

In verse 15 the Good Shepherd connects himself and his attitude toward the sheep with his Father. The Good Shepherd's emphatic declaration of ownership and commitment to the sheep is bound up in his relationship with the Father. "As the Father knows me, even so I know the Father, and I lay down my life for the sheep." Jesus was not only the Good Shepherd, he was also the Good Steward and as such a role model—or rather, the role model—for all who would serve as under shepherd of His flock. The commitment, the character, and the competency to serve emanates from our relationship with the Father—the owner of all we are and all we possess in trust. As non-owners we are distinguished from the hireling by this reality and because of this reality, by God's grace, we should never run from danger that threatens His flock nor should we weigh the benefits to self before considering the needs of those entrusted to us. Like the Good Shepherd, we should be ready to lay it all on the line for those that are his. We are stewards of His people.

Spiritual Gifts in the Modern World



James J. Londis

Dr. Londis chairs the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at Kettering College, Ohio. Prior to that he taught religion at Atlantic Union College where he later became President, pastored the Sligo Church in Maryland, USA, and served as the Ethics and Integrity Officer of the Kettering Health Network. He holds a Ph.D in philosophy of religion from Boston University and was a Merrill Fellow at Harvard University. He is married more than 50 years to Dolores Kennedy and has two children and three grandchildren.

Benny Hinn, the television evangelist-healer, draws enormous crowds to his campaigns around the world. He claims he has received the spiritual “gifts” of healing and evangelism.

Yet a 2007 television news magazine report suggested he lived a lavish lifestyle, put his family on the payroll, and could not verify the healings reputedly done in his crusades and on television. The source of this information was people who used to work for him, including a former chauffeur and accountant.

In recent years we have seen a remarkable upsurge in Pentecostal religions and the “spiritual gifts” movement. Unfortunately, there is a great deal of confusion around this issue, which can be clarified only by reexamining the primary biblical passages that speak to the issue.

Questions Screaming for Answers

Let us admit that the biblical teachings about spiritual gifts can be confusing. The apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:28 that God has “appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues” (NRSV).^{*} Clearly, he is referring to some of the spiritual gifts present in the early church.

At every period of church history the “deeds of power [and] gifts of healing” have been seen as dramatic gifts from God, which cannot help deeply attracting eyewitnesses to them. But what about the other spiritual gifts—of teaching, preaching, or speaking in tongues? In our time pastors proclaim that all Christians have spiritual gifts to be used in the proclamation of the gospel, including administration, hospitality, and nurturing. We are urged to “discover” our spiritual gifts and then use them. When we do, church growth will result.

Here is where confusion infiltrates a crucial teaching with questions that scream to be asked:

“Is there a difference between administration as a skill developed through education and experience, and administration as a spiritual gift?”

“Is there a difference between pastoring or teaching as skills one acquires, and these same qualities as gifts of the Spirit?”

“What is the difference between being a hospitality celebrity, like Martha Stewart, and having hospitality as a spiritual gift?”

“Why does a Christian who feels called to help others possess the gift of service, while a dedicated Christian social worker in the community does not exercise a spiritual gift?”

The apostle Paul implicitly answers such questions in his remarkable discourse on spiritual gifts in the twelfth chapter of his first letter to the church at Corinth. These new Christians, fresh out of pagan worship (they were not converted Jews or “God-fearers”—Gentiles converted to Judaism before they became Christians), were used to frenzy and ecstasy in their religious experience. Their culture tended to equate spirituality with emotional intensity. As a result, few if any ever asked the question in relation to Christian worship: Even if intense, how do we know our ecstasy is an authentic experience of the divine?

Deeply embedded in their experience, the new believers could not help ranking their brothers and sisters in proportion to the sensationalism of the gifts they



Key Text...

1 Corinthians 12

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. 2 You know that when you were pagans, you were enticed and led astray to idols that could not speak. 3 Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says "Let Jesus be cursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit. 4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; 5 and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; 6 and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. 7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 8 To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses. 12 For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body--Jews or Greeks, slaves or free--and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. 14 Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. 15 If the foot would say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body.

manifested. If you performed miracles, uttered prophecies, or spoke in tongues, you were obviously superior to those who, in their own quiet ways, loved one another and gave themselves unselfishly to Christ. Week after week, Paul seems to suggest, the spiritual gifts that elevated people into prominence turned some of them into self-righteous, unfeeling snobs. Those with less sensational roles became jealous and felt spiritually inferior. They could not understand why God had given them “lesser” gifts than He had given to others.

Talents and Gifts—What’s the Difference?

Paul tackles this problem by asking a fundamental question: Why is the Spirit given to the church?

His answer is straightforward: Certainly not for the exaltation of one member over another, but for the good of the whole. Spiritual gifts are to foster unity, not bickering; love, not jealousy. When the result of a “gift” is the fracturing of the church, it cannot be a gift of the Spirit!

Paul’s counsel helps us distinguish not only between true and false gifts, but between “talents” or capabilities and “gifts” of the Spirit.

A talent is morally neutral: it may produce good or evil. The talent to inspire people through oratory may be used by a Hitler for warmongering, or by a Roosevelt to defend freedom against fascism.

Spiritual gifts are different. They are not morally neutral. They must always be used for good and never for evil. True spiritual gifts unify the church; they never result in separation between believers.

To illustrate his thesis, Paul describes the church with the metaphor of the body. He seems to be saying, “Doesn’t the foot understand that when it attacks another member of the body of Christ, it attacks itself?” There is no independent existence in the church. We are literally “knit together” in Christ. What affects one, affects all.

“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:12, 13, NRSV).

In another place Paul uses the image of putting on Christ as one would put on a robe or a uniform. When we see firefighters or police officers, for example, the uniform minimizes differences of color, ethnicity, or gender, and highlights the fact that these people are united in a common mission. That uniform means they are dedicated to taking care of us as well as one another. In Christ our differences are as nothing compared to what we have in common—the Lordship of Jesus.

A talent is mine and has a life of its own. It leads to rivalry (we compete through our talents for careers, schools, and even romantic interests). We receive our talents at birth and enhance them through education and practice.

A gift does not belong to me but to the church. It has no life apart from the church. It leads not to rivalry, but to mutual support. It is received at baptism, not at birth, and it is nurtured not through education or practice so much as daily spiritual discipleship. A spiritual gift may manifest itself through a talent, but it is not the same as a talent.

sermon

...Key Text



For Example

16 And if the ear would say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? 18 But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. 19 If all were a single member, where would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many members, yet one body. 21 The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." 22 On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23 and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; 24 whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, 25 that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. 26 If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it. 27 Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. 28 And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 30 Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? 31 But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

Talents in the ministry of the church would refer to one's personal and professional qualifications, such as good judgment, intelligence, pleasant preaching voice, educational preparation, etc. The spiritual gift of ministry would refer to how one dedicated those talents to the building up of the body of Christ rather than oneself.

A talented singer's performance focuses on the audience's response to their singing; a spiritually gifted singer (talented to be sure) is primarily conscious of how God might use their gift to build up the church. While a talent well utilized is a pleasure to experience, a spiritual gift faithfully exercised is a blessing to one's experience. Martha Stewart may know how to set a table and make people feel comfortable; a church member with the gift of hospitality makes his guests feel accepted by Christ Himself. A talented person informs and performs; a spiritually gifted person is used by the Spirit to transform.

The Gifts to Hunger For

Even though Paul is diplomatic with his new members, not wanting to unnecessarily discourage or offend them, the point is obvious: the least desirable gifts are those that create friction and disunity, such as speaking in tongues. The "best" gifts—such as faith, hope, and love—unify! And unlike tongues, prophesying, and healing, faith, hope, and love are the most widely distributed spiritual gifts. All members have them, and for that reason alone they are the most important.

You cannot be jealous of a member whose love embraces you; you cannot envy a member whose faith and hope inspires your faith and hope! It is the externally obvious gifts that create problems. So as Paul moves into 1 Corinthians 13, he nails home his thesis: Without love, all the other gifts are virtually worthless.

Faith, hope, and love cannot fracture the church. Furthermore, because every believer is given these desirable gifts, they cannot produce envy. You cannot be jealous over love or pout over hope when all believers possess them! All this counsel is a preface to Paul's magnificent discourse on love in 1 Corinthians 13.

If you belong to Christ, you are gifted with love. Spiritually centered people impress others with their sincerity and devotion to the cause of God, not because of the "wonders" they allegedly manifest.

When a congregation's best soprano sings a difficult and impressive aria from the Elijah just before the pastor's sermon, they need to remember that they are worshipping God through singing. Their aria is a gift to God and through God to the congregation. It is not primarily for the congregation that they sing. Their offering to God is designed to facilitate the work of the Holy Spirit as He seeks to transform the congregation through the worship experience. Regardless of how we view spiritual gifts, Paul reminds us that the "best gifts" (faith, hope, and love) seldom get applause. Let us earnestly covet the best gift of all, without which all our other gifts are like "sounding brass and tinkling cymbals"—noisy and attention-getting, but without lasting significance. Let us seek to build up the church and bear witness to the power of the gospel.

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The Gift of Influence



Dr. Don Jacobsen

Don Jacobsen holds a Doctorate of Ministry from Howard University, Washington DC. From 1955 to 2001 he served in, among other positions, the pastoral ministry, church administrative leadership, as professor at Andrews University Theological Seminary, and Field Secretary at the General Conference for Adventist World Radio. He has authored three books, conducted about 40 evangelistic series at home and during his travels together with his wife, Ruthie, to more than 120 countries. He and Ruthie have 2 sons, 2 granddaughters and one great granddaughter.

Have you heard the name Norman Borlaug? I hadn't until recently, but Borlaug was the man—one of only six in history—who won the Nobel Peace Prize, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, and the Congressional Gold Medal. What an amazing feat! What did he win them for? For developing hybridized grain crops—wheat, corn, oats—that would produce under even the most abject growing conditions, anywhere in the world.

It is estimated that Borlaug's research has saved more than a billion people—and counting—from starvation. But wait, there's more to this story. Henry Wallace was a farmer in the state of Iowa, USA, before being chosen by Franklin Roosevelt as Secretary of Agriculture, and later, Vice President. Wallace

would spearhead the Borlaug research project and find the money for it because he believed that we could use the plentiful resources on our planet to feed every living person, if we could just manage them well. Wallace sent Borlaug to one of Mexico's most desolate farming areas, and what he did there changed the future of farming world-wide, thus rescuing a billion people from starvation. Perhaps it was really Henry Wallace who should have received the accolades.

Then, again, one could ask where Henry Wallace gained his love for growing things and his believe that our world could sustain everyone? It turns out that, when Henry was five, his father became a faculty member at the University of Iowa. There, a brilliant young student named George became Henry's hero. As George did his research, Henry was there, looking over his shoulder, discovering the miraculous way things grow. In young Henry's heart a love affair grew with the things of nature, which would eventually place him as U. S. Secretary of Agriculture, and open the way for the Borlaug projects. Perhaps it was rather this George-Washington Carver-whose influence on Wallace who should have received the medals and fame for his influence on Wallace!

But that's not the beginning of the story either. Moses and Susan were simple farmers in Missouri, USA. Although Missouri still supported slavery, Moses and Susan did everything in their power to ease the suffering created by slavery. A slave family worked on their farm, but were treated with respect, and as hired help rather than slaves. In fact, the slave mother, Mary, and Susan became inseparable friends.

Late one January night, a band of hooligans with sacks over their heads came pillaging through the countryside, burned down Moses and Susan's barn, torched their crops, and killed several of their neighbors. They also kidnapped Mary, her one year-old daughter and five day-old baby son.

By dawn, Susan was so distraught that she pled with Moses to do whatever he could to find Mary and the children. He sent runners in all directions and two days later made contact with the offenders. He arranged to meet them at an intersection of two roads just across the state line in Kansas.

Through the night Moses rode his last remaining horse till he met up with the ruffians and made them an offer. He would swap the horse for Mary and her children. He learned that Mary and her daughter were dead, but that they would make the trade for the baby who had been stuffed inside a burlap bag and was barely alive. As the hooded horsemen rode off into the night, Moses opened the bag and placed the baby inside his own coat and shirt where the warmth of his body could help keep the child alive. All the rest of the night he walked and as he walked he talked to the baby, and sang to him.

When he arrived home the next day, Moses and Susan decided they would keep the baby, adopt him, and raise him as their own. They would educate him like his mother would have wanted him to be, and they would give him their name. So Mary's baby, whom she had named George Washington, would grow up as George Washington Carver. Would it not have been more appropriate for the Nobel Peace Prize—for helping save uncounted people from starvation—to have been awarded to these two unassuming Missouri farmers, Moses and Susan Carver?

Have you ever wondered who touched a life in your history that resulted in you being who, and where, you are today? Whose life will you touch today who will perhaps, in turn, profoundly influence someone you many never meet and change their destiny? What a gift our influence can be.

young adult

Dear Talent-Digger



Christina Neagu
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I saw you when you put your backpack behind the door. I saw you when you sat down in the corner of the room where you like to lie down, hoping that, if you close your eyes, you will not feel or think anything. I know how difficult it is to come back from that place where you buried your single talent. I've done that several times. It's like you are coming in defeated from a battle field. You tried to do

your best but nothing worked out, so you decided to quit. The best thing you could do with your talent was to hide it in a hole to protect it. At least, that was the only idea I could think of. I used to hide my talent because I didn't believe that there was anything special about it.

When I saw my friends' talents, I always thought that those were real talents. They knew how to speak in public and how to build houses. They knew how to write a good article and how to organize a good event. I, on the other hand, knew only how to smile and make children and youth feel comfortable. My talent was nothing, when I compared it to their big talents. My talent seemed to be a coin: the smallest coin. When I went to bury my coin for the third time I remembered that everyone is important to God, even the children, and those not necessarily needing a house or a great speech. There are people who only need a smile; there are children and youth who need to feel welcomed in a new place. If I buried my talent, they would miss me, because maybe no one else would do the same thing for them. Maybe you don't know to do great things but you can do things that no one else can. God put something unique in you. Don't bury it.

Sometimes when I look at you I remember me. I don't like to repeat something. I prefer to quit instead of repeating it over and over again. I am a perfectionist. I am that kind of perfectionist who gets discouraged very fast. I wanted to bury my talent after my first article that had not been written very well. I was there, near the hole I dug, with my talent in my hands. I was ready to drop it when God reminded me about this verse: "A just man falls seven times and rises up again." (Proverbs 24:16). I think that this verse is very encouraging for those who are tempted to quit because something did not work the first time around. Maybe perfection is not so much about getting things right the first time around, but to not quit after the first attempt. I'm asking you now, please, do not quit. Try it the suggested 8 times – at least!

If you are like me, you like all the things that start with great: great events, great people, great meetings, great everything. You like to be somewhere where great things are happening. You don't like to spend your time doing common things, staying at home in the kitchen and cutting potatoes, or going to work and doing the same tasks every day. I imagine how you felt when you saw the coin you received and when you looked at your friend's talents. You felt discouraged. It seemed that God was unfair with you. That's why you buried your coin, isn't it? You don't want to live the common life that God seems to have planned for you. I want to remind you of something: Moses was a no-name shepherd before becoming the great leader that you admire. Samuel was a janitor at the temple before he became one of the great judges of Israel. King David was a shepherd boy in the beginning and even Jesus started by being a carpenter. Don't let your coin stay there in a hole. Remember that he "who has been faithful over a few things, will be made ruler over many things" (Matthew 25:23).

I am one of those people who seem to have just a single talent. Perhaps you feel the same way. I was a strange person. Sometimes I would think that I could do nothing good, and other times I would think that I am too good to do only the common things. Sometimes I felt like nobody and other times I felt like the hub of the universe, albeit an undiscovered hub. Today, however, I am happy to share that I am one who has finally dug up my only talent, cleaned it up and put it to use. I did small things. I smiled. Sometimes I failed, but then I tried one more time. I feel happy now. If you want to be happy also, here is my advice: Go and dig up your talent too.



Your friend

With only one talent

Random thought...

...Who does
"intellectual
property" belong
to?

As the moon and the stars of our solar system shine by the reflected light of the sun, so, as far as their teaching is true, do the world's great thinkers reflect the rays of the Sun of Righteousness. Every gleam of thought, every flash of the intellect, is from the Light of the world (Education, p14).

13th Sabbath School Offering

Sabbath School was established in the Adventist church in 1853 before there was an organized church. However, it was 25 years before anyone thought to take an offering for Sabbath School expenses. In 1885 the first mission offering was taken in the Upper Columbia Conference to send missionaries to Australia. Then word came to the church that the people on Pitcairn Island were keeping the Sabbath and wanted to be baptized, but the church could not find a ship passing that way. The Pitcairn Ship became the first Sabbath School project with it sailing from San Francisco on October 28, 1890.

The first “13th Sabbath Offering Project was introduced in 1912 to establish a mission in India. With approximately four hundred 13th Sabbaths since that first project, this offering has allowed the church to build schools, dormitories, hospitals, clinics, churches, mission-launches, lamb-shelters, printing presses and universities around the world. Often there is more than one project for an offering so there have been over a thousand projects. Because Tithe money is not allowed to be used for buildings, the 13th Sabbath offering has usually been for construction-type projects.

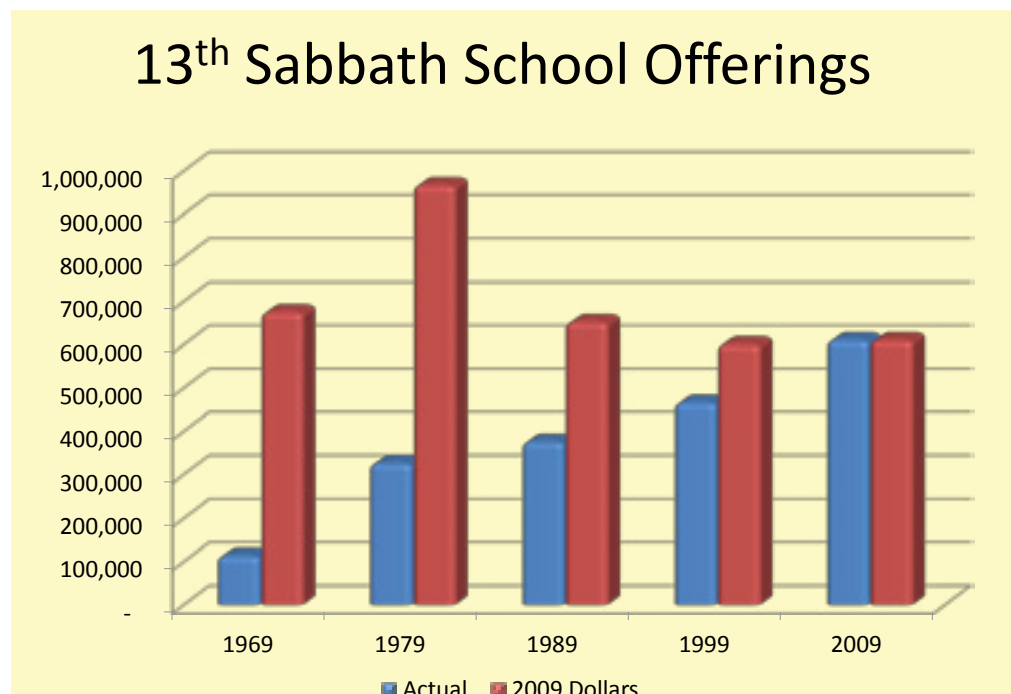
The world wide work of the church has progressed much faster because of the four times a year when the world-church takes up an offering in Sabbath School to support a project in one of the divisions. Because the mission stories for that quarter are focused on that division and their projects, the church learns about the needs of diverse nationalities, races and cultures. Sabbath School children grow up learning about different parts of the world and where to find them on the map. An important result has been the stewardship training from an early age, and the desire to help people outside their neighborhood.

The blue bar in the chart below shows the actual offerings from 1969 to 2009 in ten-year intervals. The growth in actual offerings shows a steady increase. The red bar shows the real value of the US Dollar based on the 2009 Consumer Price Index. In the 1970s there was a 50% increase with the real value decreasing in the 80’s, 90’s and 2000’s. Over the last 100 years, the Adventist church has grown from 100,000 members to 17 million members world-wide. The 13th Sabbath Offerings have played a major role in this growth.



Dean Rogers
GC Assistant Treasurer

Dean holds a Business Administration degree from Union College, and has experience in both the private sector and the church. In over 30 years with the church, he has served as academy business manager, the Zaire Union Treasurer, Director of TRIPS and In-House Operations at the General Conference.



Talents, Gifts and Our Duty, by Ellen G. White

“However large, however small the possessions of any individual, let him remember that it is his only in trust. For his strength, skill, time, talents, opportunities, and means, he must render an account to God. This is an individual work; God gives to us, that we may become like Him, generous, noble, beneficent, by giving to others. Those who, forgetful of their divine mission, seek only to save or to spend in the indulgence of pride or selfishness, may secure the gains and pleasures of this world; but in God’s sight, estimated by their spiritual attainments, they are poor, wretched, miserable, blind, naked” (RH. May 16, 1882).

“God has lent men talents—an intellect to originate, a heart to be the place of His throne, affection to flow out in blessings to others, a conscience to convict of sin. Each one has received something from the Master, and each one is to do his part in supplying the needs of God’s work Speech is a talent. Of all the gifts bestowed on the human family, none should be more appreciated than the gift of speech. It is to be used to declare God’s wisdom and wondrous love. Thus the treasures of His grace and wisdom are to be communicated” (ibid. Apr. 9, 1901).

“Our first duty toward God and our fellow beings is that of self-development. Every faculty with which the Creator has endowed us should be cultivated to the highest degree of perfection, that we may be able to do the greatest amount of good of which we are capable. Hence that time is spent to good account which is used in the establishment and preservation of physical and mental health. We cannot afford to dwarf or cripple any function of body or mind. As surely as we do this we must suffer the consequences” (CH 107).

“Young friends, the fear of the Lord lies at the very foundation of all progress; it is the beginning of wisdom. Your Heavenly Father has claims upon you; for without solicitation or merit on your part He gives you the bounties of His providence; and more than this, He has given you all heaven in one gift, that of His beloved Son. In return for this infinite gift, He claims of you willing obedience. As you are bought with a price, even the precious blood of the Son of God, He requires that you make a right use of the privileges you enjoy. Your intellectual and moral faculties are God’s gifts, talents entrusted to you for wise improvement, and you are not at liberty to let them lie dormant for want of proper cultivation, or be crippled and dwarfed by inaction. It is for you to determine whether or not the weighty responsibilities that rest upon you shall be faithfully met, whether or not your efforts shall be well directed and your best” (FE 85, 86).