

DYNAMIC Steward

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October-December, 2013

Stewards of God's Temple

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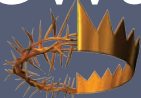
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Volume 17 ■ Number 4

My All for His Glory!



DYNAMIC Steward



My all in response to God's all!

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The *Dynamic Steward* is published quarterly by the Stewardship Ministries Department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists®.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: The articles in this publication have been revised slightly or updated to conform to the intended audience and nature of the *Dynamic Steward*. Unless otherwise stated, the New International Version of the Bible is used.

inside ds

A few years ago, my wife and I toured Rome, Italy. One of the highlights was our visit to the Sistine Chapel. We didn't mind standing in the long line waiting to enter the historic place we had only read about before. In a few moments, we knew we would see there, on the vaulted ceiling, the centerpiece of Michelangelo's great work called "The Creation of Adam." Depicted in brilliant colors was the moment God awakened man into His image. We were anxious to see the work of art in person.

The line going to the chapel moved slowly. Then we saw her. Grotesquely stretched out on the sidewalk was a woman begging for money. She hardly represented the "image" of what we were about to see. With her leg twisted in what appeared to be an agonizing and dreadful position, she begged and received donations from many of those who passed by. Soon we entered the chapel. Our wait was worth it. What a moment that must have been when God created man! The descriptive word today might be "awesome." Imagine, created in the image of God!

As we left the Sistine Chapel we retraced the steps we had walked, and there sitting on a bench—perfectly normal—was the woman, counting her day's "earnings." She had misrepresented herself and the image in which she had been created. I couldn't help but connect the two events and ask, "What does it mean to be created in the image of God?" What a risk God took that day in Eden. What an enormous gift He presented to Adam and then to Eve, and, yes, to everyone since then. Still remaining before each passing generation is the haunting question, "Do we understand, do we grasp, the value of the gift of life given to us?" Perhaps the closest we come to sincere appreciation is when life is about to be taken from us, but then is hardly the time to celebrate God's gift.

The level of appreciation with which we value God's gift of life to us is directly related to our sense of personal stewardship. This issue of the *Dynamic Steward* explores, albeit to a limited degree, how we can care for the life given to us by our Creator. We sometimes, with a jaundiced eye, consider wellness as simply the absence of disease. But is this all that God had in mind when He created man? Life is not about diet, exercise, weight control or even our attempts to muster a positive attitude. No doubt these disciplines are important, but in themselves they do not represent the divine purpose. They are, however, regimens that help open windows so that we might see, with even greater appreciation and clarity, the true value of the gift of life granted to us. They are indeed part of our stewardship. We are stewards of God's temple (1 Cor. 3:13) and that responsibility began the moment the breath of God filled mankind's lifeless form (Genesis 2:7). Truly, we can say with the psalmist, "I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well" (Psalm 139:14).



Larry R. Evans
Associate Director,
GC Stewardship Ministries



Larry R. Evans

Editor

resources

When was the last time you went looking for a miracle cure or the fountain of youth, hoping for something to diminish the signs of living on this sinful earth a little too long? During the past two decades, much research has been done on the effects of the religious life on our emotional, mental, and physical health. The documented results are astounding. Did you know that a regular prayer life, an attitude of gratitude and joy, or a spirit of forgiveness can dramatically impact your overall health? Even church attendance and Scripture reading are intimately connected to health, happiness, and longevity.

In *The Benefits of Belief*, Dr. Julián Melgosa uses research and personal stories to reveal the amazing benefits everyone can obtain from following the Lord's ways and living the Christian life. Jesus promises that anyone who follows Him will receive "an hundredfold now" (Mark 10:30). Dr. Melgosa believes it is reasonable to think that these blessings are not exclusively material, but are also related to the exercise of wisdom, resilience, and endurance that ultimately translate into good health, happiness, and well-being. Julián Melgosa is dean of the School of Education & Psychology at Walla Walla University.

The Benefits of Belief, How Faith in God Impacts Your Life, by Dr. Julian Melgosa: www.adventistbookcentre.com

Do you want an easy way to lower your blood pressure, prevent heart disease, and live a longer, healthier life? Dr. Don Hall has dedicated his life to studying and sharing the effects of diet on health with thousands of individuals. Using a step-by-step approach, Dr. Hall outlines the changes needed in moving from a cholesterol-laden, artery-clogging, animal-product diet to a wholesome plant-based diet of whole grains, legumes, fruits, nuts and vegetables.

In *The Vegetarian Advantage*, you will learn how to ensure that your nutritional needs are being met and how to avoid the pitfalls made by many new vegetarians. Meal planning guidelines and pointers on how to adopt a plant-based diet will teach you how to become a smart vegetarian. Make the change today and you, too, can enjoy a longer, healthier, and happier life.

Donald R. Hall, DrPH, CHES is founder and CEO of Wellsource, Inc. a company providing health programs for corporations, government agencies, hospitals, and health insurers. Wellsource now works with 2,000 corporations and government agencies worldwide. An active fitness and health enthusiast, Dr. Hall has completed 19 marathons, bicycled across 5 states, as well as Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, and has climbed to Camp 1 on Mount Everest.

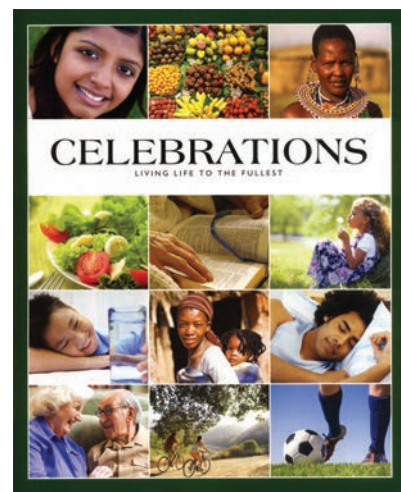
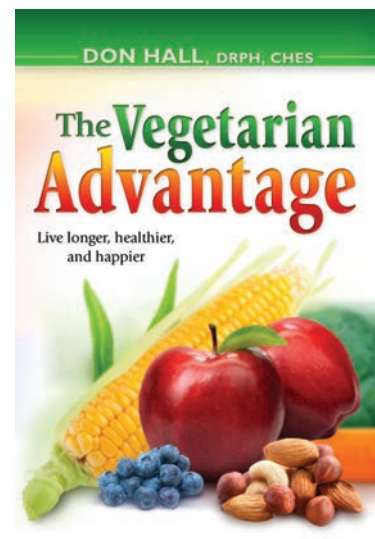
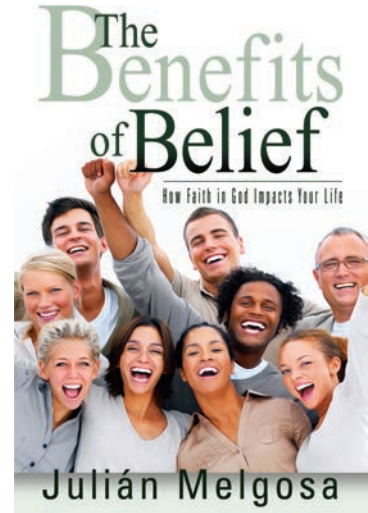
The Vegetarian Advantage, Live longer, healthier, and happier, by Dr. Don Hall: www.adventistbookcenter.com.

The authors of *Celebrations* describe the acronym as carrying "within it both the secrets of healthful lifestyle and an exuberant appreciation of the joy of living well." Health studies overwhelmingly confirm this statement to be true. So, to all those who want to live longer and better—this book is for you!

Readers will not only come away with a fuller understanding of health principles incorporated in personal choices, drinking pure water, protecting the environment, getting adequate rest, and more—they also will be inspired by the numerous, compelling photographs that bring the book to life. The joy of service to Christ and the love He has for His children permeate the pages and convey a fresh perspective to the vital topic of healthful living.

Authored by the doctors who head the Health Ministries Department of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists, *Celebrations* offers a wealth of medical and health-education experience presented in a balanced, practical way to anyone who desires to live healthfully and thrive.

Celebrations, Living Life to the Fullest. Editor: Dr. Allan Handsides. General Conference Health Ministries Department.: www.adventistbookcenter.com



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God's Gift of Good Health



Erika F. Puni
Director,
GC Stewardship Ministries

I'm writing this article on Thanksgiving Day here in Maryland, and my heart is full of praise and gratitude to God for His wonderful gifts of life and good health. Yes, I get sick and I'm fighting a cold right now; and yes, I get tired; and yes, I'm probably a few pounds heavier than I should be for my height. But despite all of these, I'm still able to do the things I want to do with my family and at work, and I'm thankful to God for the ability to think and move around freely. My body and my health, these are blessings from above.

Stewardship and Christ's Rule

As I write, I'm also thinking of my grandfather, Puni Jerome, a Samoan chief and orator who lived life to the full until he died in his sleep one Sabbath morning in 1967. He was 106 years of age. Up until the time of his death, he was still able to read his Bible and could engage anyone in conversation without losing his focus. His was an example and a testimony to what can happen when people make it a priority to take care of their bodies and minds, and follow a few basic principles for healthful living. This is biblical stewardship—living life under the rule of Jesus Christ, and honoring God in the way we live and do things in the world (Rev. 14:6,7).

Health Is a Spiritual Discipline

Now, I would be the first to admit that my grandfather was not perfect and he had his own challenges with health and life during his lifetime. He did get sick at times. But it is also a fact that he lived longer than many of his contemporaries, partly owing to his Christian faith and the lifestyle he followed after becoming an Adventist believer. Health for Puni Jerome was a spiritual discipline. It was more than not eating pork or abstaining from alcohol. It was a life that was constantly submitted to the will of God. I know this to be true because I spent the last four years of his life with him.

Balance Is Key

While Adventism meant a total change in lifestyle for Puni Jerome and his family, it was the emphasis on balanced living that he valued. He knew that there was a close relationship between eating right and longevity, and he understood the importance of rest—including cessation from the mundane activities of the first six days of the week in order to worship God on the seventh day, the Sabbath. He was fully aware of the benefits of exercise and physical labor as he worked the fields early in the morning, rested in the afternoon when the sun was too hot for comfort, and went fishing in the evening. He didn't have a motor vehicle, so he walked everywhere. If his fellow villagers or extended family were to go on special long distance trips along the coast, they would travel as a community in longboats. When it came to nutrition in the village, fresh tropical fruits and vegetables were plentiful in the gardens and there was an abundance of good drinking water for the family.

Social health in community

There's one other invaluable element in healthful living that I believe contributed to my grandfather's longevity, alertness, and peaceful demeanor—right to the end. That one quality was the part played by social relationships and human interactions.

Building rapport and good relationships with people, both within one's own family and the larger community, as well as in the church, can have positive effects on one's wellbeing and overall health. And while it is impossible to be stress-free in this world, we're strongly counseled as Christians to love one another, and to live in peace with all people (Heb 12:14; Rom 13:8). Stewardship is about making the right decisions early in life, and creating an environment where people can live together to accomplish God's purposes in the world.



From the Director's Desk...

A key strategy of General Conference Stewardship Ministries for the 2010-2015 quinquennium, is to provide Bible-based teaching on stewardship principles for Church-run universities globally. This service has found strong support in South America. Dr. Erika Puni and Pr. Miguel Pinheiro toured the region in May 2013, teaching students and consulting with theology faculty at the Peruvian Union University near Lima (Peru), River Plate Adventist University (Argentina), and UNASP II in Sao Paulo (Brazil). Over 1,000 ministerial students attended the stewardship symposium and made a commitment to be part of the process of helping church members to experience Christ personally, and become faithful stewards of His kingdom.



In August, Dr. Larry Evans, of GC Stewardship Ministries and Pr. William Bagambe, Director for East-Central Africa Division Stewardship Ministries, taught a course in stewardship for the Masters in Business Administration program at Adventist University of Africa, Nairobi campus. The MBA program is under the direction of Dr. Josephine Gnau. This was the first time that the forty-hour stewardship course has been incorporated into an Adventist university's MBA core curriculum. The class of twenty-five was composed of treasurers, accountants and auditors who serve in the East-Central Africa Division. Other universities are also considering the incorporation of the stewardship course as part of their academic curricula.



interview

Health Ministry



Dr. Peter Landless, above, (PNL), is interviewed by Larry Evans (LRE).

Peter Landless M.B.,B.Ch., M.Fam. Med., MFGP(SA),FCP(SA), FACC, FASNC, is a medical doctor who trained in South Africa, the country of his birth. During his first term of mission service, he completed a specialty in Family Medicine. In this same period he was ordained as a minister of the gospel. He subsequently specialized in internal medicine and then cardiology. Throughout this time he worked in mission outreach and pastoral work and also pursued an academic career in medicine (clinical work, teaching and research). Since 2001 he has served the global Seventh-day Adventist Church as an associate director of the department of Health Ministries. From October 2013, he was elected to serve as the Director of the Health Ministries department. He is also the executive director of the International Commission for the Prevention of Alcoholism and Drug Dependency (ICPA), a non-governmental organization with a United Nations Charter.

LRE: Dr. Landless, when did you first develop an interest in medicine?

PNL: From my early childhood, my mother would always say to

my brother, “You’re going to be the doctor, and he will be the preacher.” So I was going to be the pastor, and it was something I loved. I loved the church from childhood. My mum would pray, “Lord, make him to be a missionary in the four corners of the earth.” As time went on, and having read *Ministry of Healing* and *Desire of Ages*, I saw how intricately and inextricably the gospel and healing are linked. Wherever Jesus performed a healing miracle, mission came into it.

LRE: I understand that you had a private practice for a number of years and completed a number of specialties.

PNL: Yes. Our first appointment was in a church mission practice, which was a private practice but which belonged to the church. We drew a denominational salary out of the money earned and the balance went into church work. We completed a family practice specialty and did family practice for 11 years. Later I did specialties in internal medicine, cardiology, and nuclear cardiology. Internal medicine was part of the basic foundation in the medical school where I took my training in South Africa.

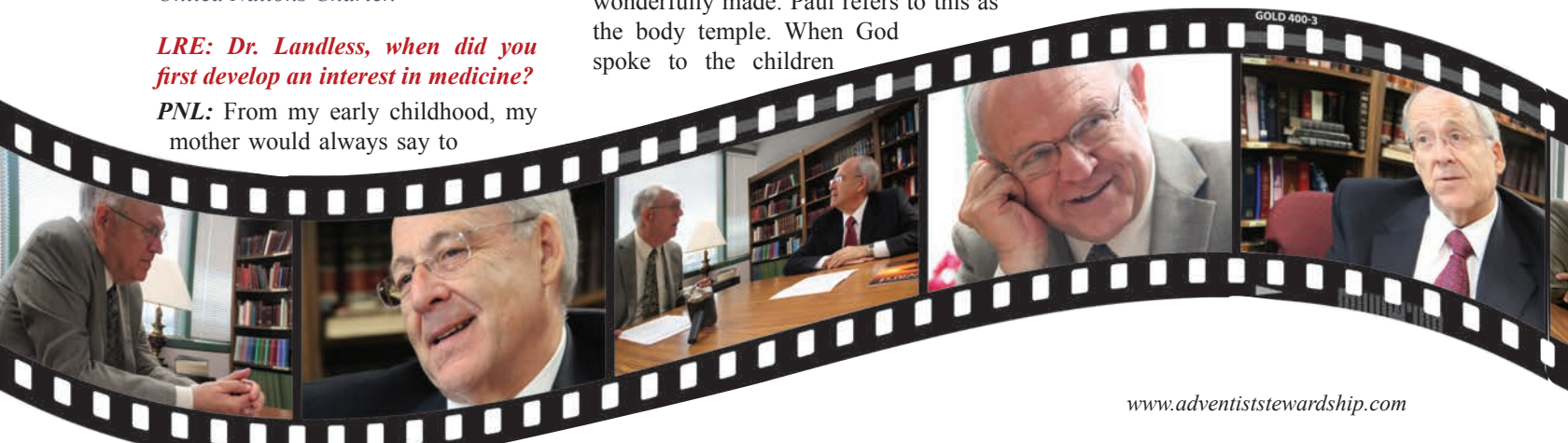
LRE: What would cause you to leave an excellent medical practice and become a world health educator?

PNL: It’s a question that many people ask. Within four years of our first mission appointment, and shortly after medical school, I received a call from the union, and they said, “The committee has voted to ordain you to the gospel ministry.” This is something I didn’t expect. When one accepts that calling, it informs what you will do in the rest of your life. When the call came through to join Dr. Allan Handysides with health ministry at the General Conference, my initial response was, “No.” I was at the peak of a wonderful medical career but my wife had been praying, “Lord, give him focus.” He showed us in no uncertain terms that coming here was His will.

LRE: Why is it that you associate health ministries with stewardship?

PNL: Health is not a right. Health is a gift. Health is not earned. It may be preserved; it may be cared for; it may be nurtured, but it is not something that is an absolute right. It is natural to be concerned about our own health. However, if we look at Ellen White’s visions of 1848 and 1863, it doesn’t end there. The reason health visions were given is so that we can be of service to others. The revelations shown to her were not found to be palatable to her at first. She found them difficult to implement but she personally took the instruction seriously.

We often think that this issue of health is for ourselves. The gift of health has really been given for us to serve God. We are stewards of that gift—a gift to be shared with the community. Psalm 139 reminds us that we are fearfully and wonderfully made. Paul refers to this as the body temple. When God spoke to the children





of Israel, He gave them health instructions. Interestingly, those biblical health instructions are still being validated today. In the ministry of Jesus, we see that He not only rebukes and encourages, but we also see a huge amount of time devoted to healing. And that's what we've been called to do. We have been created for His glory; we have been created to reveal Him; and by definition, if we are Christians, we are created to be conduits of His grace to a broken world.

LRE: Do we complicate spirituality by giving an emphasis to health principles?

PNL: We can. But God didn't intend that to be the case. You will recall that Jesus said, "Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the Pharisees, your right-doing..." They returned tithe to the very ounces of herbs, and so on, and they prayed on the street corners. Yes, we can make it complicated. However, that's not the focus of a heart relationship with Jesus. We can make the focus vegetarianism, for example, instead of realizing that God has given us a recipe, as it were, a *modus operandi*. When you get a new car, you get a technical instrument. We'd be wise to look at the instructions on how to use it and get the maximum, the best 'bang for the buck,' out of it, by following those instructions.

LRE: Since you mentioned vegetarianism, "Is the church's emphasis on the vegetarian diet something of the past? Is it something we should minimize?"

PNL: Not at all. The church's emphasis on the vegetarian diet should be seen as a component of the health message. But by itself it's not the health message. Jesus Himself said, "It's not what goes into the body, it's what comes out." So we need to realize that spirituality is related to how we practice health. The advantages of being a vegetarian have been proven and become quite accepted in the scientific world, but that hasn't always been the case. Dr. Mervyn Harding, when he was trying to get a paper published 40 or 50 years ago on this subject, had it refused by one of the top medical journals in the world. They said, "Vegetarianism will never be a feature in any scientific journal." Such is not the case anymore.

LRE: Why the confusion about this in the church?

PNL: Unfortunately some within the church say, "It's a list of do's and don'ts and so on." But it was never intended to be a list of works. Jesus said, "I am come that you might have life, and have it to the full." It's not only about being vegetarian. It's resting adequately. It's having positive relationships. It's about being temperate in the amount of work or travel, the amount of water we drink, our social connectedness. These are all crucial components of the health message in the context of our relationship with Jesus.

LRE: Are you saying that it's not important what we eat.

PNL: No. We're expected to be stewards of what He has given to us. Our health message was given to make a church happy, healthy and holy. That is why it was given. The health advantages of the church teachings were noted by *Time* magazine, by *National Geographic* and CNN and, of course, the scientific study on Adventists and their health has caught the attention of many. While the world talks about it, we sadly don't apply it very consistently. The message was given not only to fit us for service. It assists us in having a close relationship with Him as well. It gives us energy, it improves our ability to discern, to understand truth, to relate, to do all these things. All of these are crucially important, but they need to be kept within the perspective of our walk with Jesus.

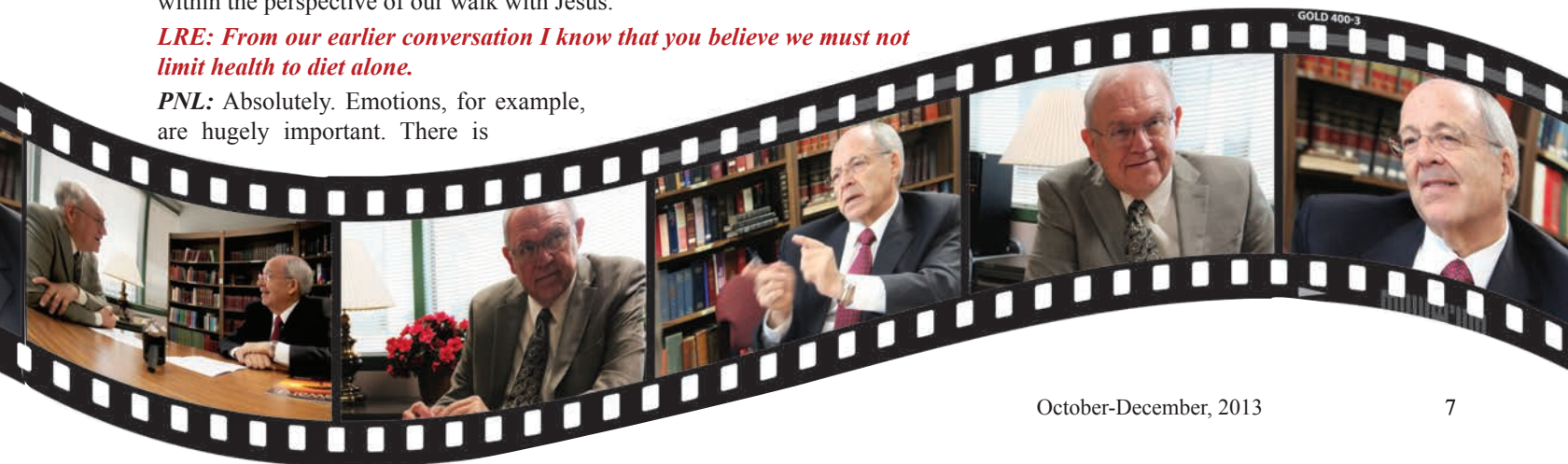
LRE: From our earlier conversation I know that you believe we must not limit health to diet alone.

PNL: Absolutely. Emotions, for example, are hugely important. There is

more to promoting mental health to a depressed individual than simply saying, "Ah, pray more, do more exercise, eat more healthfully." Chemical imbalances are something that are real. They're not fantasies or people's imagination. It is true, however, that a healthful diet, exercise, adequate sleep, trust in God, water, optimism, sunshine—all play a role in how we feel and in our emotions. Soon you'll see in the mission book coming up in 2015, that there's a strong emphasis on mental and emotional well-being. It does affect our health.

LRE: What is the greatest challenge facing the church regarding our stewardship of "God's temple?"

PNL: I would love to see the church fully embrace this grace-filled ministry. I'd love them to see that this is not a list of do's and don'ts. I'd love to let them see that we're not shackling ourselves by embracing the health message. We're being liberated! It's being fitted for service, it's being energized for living. We've been given all the building blocks, as a gift. We've been told about it—the nutrition, the exercise, the water, the sunshine, the trust in God, the air, the rest, temperance. We're encouraged to be optimistic. We're encouraged to make wise choices. We should look after, and be stewards of our environment, and then we need to have social support. So what would I love to see for the church? I'd love to see the church embracing this as the optimal gift that God has given to us, not as a restrictive box that we're being forced into, and, rather, hearing Him say, "If you love Me, keep My commandments." Then we shall experience a grace-filled and joyful life, even in our brokenness.



Stewards of Mental Health



Julian Melgosa

Julian Melgosa is professor of psychology at Walla Walla University. He has a long career as a teacher from the elementary to the graduate levels, administrator and psychologist in Europe, Asia, and America. He is the author of several books about marriage, old age, self-help psychology, and the connection between religion and psychology.

Most people have been granted a reasonable portion of mental health allowing them to hold a general sense of well-being and enjoy life frequently. But preserving mental health does not always come naturally and one needs to learn to keep it and prevent mental and emotional dysfunctions. This means that we need to utilize thoughts and behaviors to stay free from fears and anxiety, to be aware of one's own potential, to cope with the stresses of life, to choose love over hatred, and to secure a reasonable amount of happiness, even in this imperfect world. With the exception of some extreme cases, everybody has the capability to preserve and enhance mental health. Yes, a healthy mind is an essential part of the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in us (1 Cor. 6:19).

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, about 26 percent of Americans 18 and older (that is about 60 million people!) suffer from a diagnosable mental disorder in

a given year.¹ This piece of data calls for ways to avoid such common conditions. When we look at depression, the most common global mental disorder, the World Health Organization (WHO) forecasted in the 1990's, that by 2020, depression would become the second leading cause of disability throughout the world.² The prediction turned out to be optimistic, for the same organization—in their fact sheet N° 369 (October 2012), reported depression as the *major* cause of disability worldwide.³

Other mental conditions are following a similar pattern, effectively alerting everyone to the need to adopt preventive and palliative measures. Much can be done through self-help and by the power of the Holy Spirit that is in our bodies and minds. Let us look at three basic areas of attention for mental and emotional health.

Managing our thoughts

It is a good habit to wash one's hands before eating. But, what happens if on occasion one forgets to do it? Probably nothing! Washing one's hands reduces the chances of infection, but it is not the only protective mechanism. The immune system of a healthy individual is there to ensure that the multiple germs making it through our digestive tracts get properly neutralized. However, a rude sentence uttered in a moment of anger, or a lustful or greedy thought may produce a virulent moral infection and cause hurt to somebody else, the deterioration of a relationship, retaliation from an opponent, or even damage to an entire community. Morally, undue thoughts and behaviors will cause self-defilement. This was Jesus' point when he said that, "Out of the heart [mind] come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what defile a person; but eating with unwashed hands does not defile them" (Matt. 15:19,20). This principle is a sure guide which we can employ to guard ourselves from adverse immoral consequences.

But as crucial as the moral implications of our thoughts are, they are not the only implications involved. Mental health is partly dependent on the way we process thoughts—our thinking style, which depends on our choice. Take worry, for example. Worrying can be useful if it is rational and focused on possible solutions. But when worry is compulsive, exaggerated, preoccupied with things that might happen, and unable to suggest solutions, then it is a precursor of anxiety or obsessive-compulsive thinking and it must be rejected. Another example: negativistic thinking about oneself ("I will never be able to adapt to this new location"), about the past ("This is the way I am, because I was bullied in school), or about the future ("Today's financial crisis will never be solved!"). Such patterns of thinking have been found of higher incidence in individuals with depressive, obsessive-compulsive, and anxious tendencies than in the general population. That is why psychotherapists teach their clients to challenge all-or-nothing thinking ("Either I marry Brittany or no one at all"), catastrophic thinking ("Not getting this job will be awful"), or erroneous attributions ("She had the accident when coming to my invitation, therefore, I am to blame").

As a steward of my mental health, I must do whatever it takes to dispel erroneous, negativistic, and toxic thoughts. And at the same time, with God's sure help, I should purposely harbor thinking-content that will nourish my mind (see Phil. 4:8). People use counseling strategies as mentioned above, but religious strategies can be highly efficacious: Fervent prayer and Bible reading (especially portions of Psalms and Proverbs) are excellent ways to dispel unwanted thoughts, achieve solace and promote the flow of positive emotions.

Governing our behaviors

There are also behaviors conducive to emotional and mental disturbances. A typical example is addictive behaviors. One does not have to use a chemical substance to be addicted. Many Christians think that they cannot be victims of this problem, for they will never use drugs. But people who have never tried alcohol or drugs may end up caught by addictive behaviors to food, work, pornography, money, shopping, computer games, internet, gambling, soap operas and many more. A number of signs may alert me to the reality that I am approaching a psychological addiction: I feel that I need more quantity of that substance or time with that behavior in order to reach satisfaction. If I quit, I feel very uncomfortable and have strong urges to return. I become weaker and less able to control myself, end up spending too much money and/or time with that behavior, lie in order to hide that behavior and my family/social life deteriorates as a result of my involvement with such behavior. These are serious warnings, and if I notice any of the above, as steward of my mind, I must do something to tackle them, like Paul said: "All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any" (1 Cor. 6:12).

Addictions of any kind are such dangerous behaviors that they require external support. Firstly, supernatural intervention, and secondly, the help of one or more persons that can oversee our attempts to abandon the behavior. Of course, the easiest course is to prevent addictions by avoiding the paths where our weaknesses may lead us. But sometimes people are already caught in the vicious circle and need to admit the situation and work together with other agents to overcome the addiction.

Directing our emotions

The concept of emotional intelligence emerged in 1995 with the publication of the book, *Emotional Intelligence*, by Daniel Goleman. The historic view of intelligence as the construct measured by IQ tests was refuted and a more comprehensive and realistic concept of intelligence added to the field of psychology. Emotional intelligence has to do with mastering our own emotions in order to achieve goals and to build relationships. As steward of my mental health, I must learn how to manage my emotions and transform negative ones into positive ones. I also need to learn to endure those painful emotional experiences that are unavoidable and adopt an attitude of hope as outlined by Jesus.

A helpful passage for dealing with adverse emotions (chiefly unhappiness) is found in John 16:20-24. This statement can be 'gold' to believers who need to reject those moods that may take them closer to depression. In this passage Jesus talks about life being unfair at times, like His disciples being harassed for doing the right thing, yet having to experience grief; but Jesus promises that their grief will be turned into joy. It talks about help being on its way (the comparison is made with how quickly a woman forgets pain after her child is born). It talks about unpleasant past memories that would be wiped away. Clearly, Jesus knew that much of the misery that human beings experience human misery has to do with painful workings of their past. It talks about grief being sometimes necessary ("now is your time of grief") because oftentimes pain has some meaning. And it talks about permanent joy at the time of His return, when He will give his children the everlasting joy that nobody can take away.

Jesus reminds us all of a time when nothing will be requested because all needs will be met. In the meantime, he invites us to go to Him and learn from Him who is gentle and humble in heart, so that we can find rest for our souls (Matt. 11: 29).



1. <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/the-numbers-count-mental-disorders-in-america/index.shtml>, accessed August 29, 2013.
2. Murray CJL, Lopez AD. The Global Burden of Disease: A Comprehensive Assessment of Mortality and Disability from Diseases, Injuries and Risk Factors in 1990 and Projected to 2020. Geneva, Switzerland; World Health Organization, 1996.
3. <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs369/en/>, accessed August 29, 2013.

How Valuable Is Your Health?



Don Hall

Dr. Hall DrPH, CHES, is a graduate of Loma Linda University. He is the founder of Wellsource Inc. and Lifelong Health, two companies that develop resources for promoting healthy living, the first for corporations, the second for churches. He is actively involved in health ministry, helping the North American Division and in corporate wellness throughout the U.S.

Being a faithful steward covers more than just our money. It also includes caring for our health, one of the greatest of God's gifts. I sometimes ask people, "How valuable is your health?" Would any of us take a million dollars in exchange for good health and all we would have to do is be sick and miserable the rest of our life? I don't think so. Good health is the most valuable asset we possess. The next question then is, "What are you doing to protect your health and even improve it?"

In a recent article in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA July 10, 2013), researchers evaluated the health of the nation. As a nation, Americans are not the best stewards of health. The article pointed

out that when comparing the United States with 34 other advanced countries in life expectancy, the U.S. ranked 27th out of 34. This is not very good especially when the U.S. spends more than any other nation on health care. The article pointed out that as a nation, Americans are not getting their money's worth when it comes to experiencing good health.

They also pointed out the leading causes of premature death in the U.S. Poor diet was number one, followed by smoking, high blood pressure, overweight, low physical activity, high blood sugar, high cholesterol, air pollution, and alcohol. These are all factors that can largely be controlled—and are with the exception of pollution, are all lifestyle choices. Eighty-two percent of the years of life lost due to premature death can be attributed to these first eight factors.

Good stewards of health will look at these major causes of early death and take preventive actions. Let's consider the first cause of early death—poor nutrition. The study found 8 nutritional practices responsible for the majority of deaths. Diets high in red and processed meats, sugar-sweetened beverages, added sugars, sodium and salt. Diets low in fruits and vegetables, whole grains (eating too much highly refined white bread, white rice, and cereals), nuts and seeds, fiber. Furthermore we do not eat enough healthy fats as found in olive, soy and vegetable oils, flax seed, walnuts and avocados. However we eat far too much saturated fat, which is found in solid fats such as butter, coconut oil and animal fats.

Sounds familiar doesn't it, and this has been taught in our church for over 100 years. "Grains, fruits, nuts, and vegetables, constitute the diet chosen for us by our Creator." (*Ministry of Healing*, p. 296). This quote echoes the whole, plant-based diet prescribed by God in Genesis 1:29. Other recent research from the Adventist Health Study (*JAMA Internal Medicine*, published online June 3, 2013) verifies that the vegetarian diet, high in fruits, vegetables, whole grains and nuts, is best for our health and decreases death from any cause by 12% (by 19% for vegan men). The accompanying editorial in the same medical journal commenting on this study was titled, "Should everyone be a vegetarian?" The author pointed out the obvious advantages of a vegetarian diet to one's health: lower risk of heart disease, strokes, diabetes and many cancers. **Scientific evidence now shows that vegetarians live significantly longer than non-vegetarians. The implication was that everyone could benefit by eating more like a vegetarian.**

The next question to ask is, "How many of our church members are following this good advice?" How many are eating a healthy diet, getting regular physical activity daily, keeping their weight in a healthy range, making sure their blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar levels are in the healthy range? If we are not working proactively on these critical determinants of good health, are we being good stewards?

None of us are perfect, physically or morally. We can all make improvements and we need God's help in being faithful stewards of all of God's gifts to us. As we ask for God's guidance daily, let's include the stewardship of health. As good stewards of our health, will we enjoy the benefits of better health and a longer life. In addition, we will also be more productive in God's vineyard of life which is the goal of all good stewards.



Stewards of God's Talents

Scripture speaks of our physical bodies as being the temple of God (1 Cor. 6:19). How might this impact the health of our body, mind and emotions? Does temperance, diet or exercise have anything to do with stewardship? What motivates us to be “God’s ‘Stewards of the Temple?’”

In “The Parable of the Talents” told by Jesus in Matthew 25:13-30, we find important clues to our question. At the center of the story is a man who had three servants. Before leaving on a long journey, he gave them each talents of money. When he returned he discovered that all but one had a good return on the money he had given them. It becomes clear that Jesus pictured Himself as the One traveling on a long journey, and His disciples as the servants who had been given the talents to be used in His absence. They were to take these talents and, as good stewards, make them more valuable for their Master. They were not to sit idly waiting for His return.

Among the many applications of the truths found in this profound parable, is the importance of adhering to the principles of health (*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 346-348). Like many other “talents,” our health is given to us as a gift that we must take care of, and use for the profit of our Master.

Why Be Good Stewards of the Body?

Unfortunately, it is possible to try to make health one’s own salvation but that is not God’s plan. The Bible makes it clear when it says, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God” (Eph. 2:8). It is only by His unconditional love and grace that we will have eternal life. Stewardship comes in response to that gift, and not in order to achieve it. But this does leave us with the question, “Why then should we be good stewards and take good care of our bodies? Fortunately we have inspired counsel to help answer that question. There are at least four reasons we should consider:

1. GLORIFYING GOD: First, we are called to be good stewards to glorify God. As we experience better health of body, mind, emotion, and spirit we are better able to bring Him glory. The Bible is clear when it states “therefore glorify God in your body” (1 Cor 6:19, 20) and, “whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God (I Cor. 10:31). Our motivation is in response to His love and grace towards us. We do it to glorify Him.

2. THE BENEFIT OF A FULL LIFE: Second, we are good stewards for our own benefit. When God gives us principles and laws to live by, it is for our own good. As our Creator, He knows what is best for us, and that includes optimal mental, physical and spiritual wellbeing (Deut. 7:12-15; John 10:10). In a world stained by sin, God’s principles for health are for our own restoration and wellbeing—a real gift of grace!

3. SERVICE TO OTHERS: As good stewards of our bodies we are in the best condition to discern between truth and error and to use our gifts to bless others.

“Health is a blessing of which few appreciate the value; yet upon it the efficiency of our mental and physical powers largely depends. Our impulses and passions have their seat in the body, and it must be kept in the best condition physically and under the most spiritual influences in order that our talents may be



Katia Reinert

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put to the highest use” (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 346).

4. SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT: Anything that lessens physical strength enfeebles the mind and makes it less capable of discriminating between right and wrong. We become less capable of choosing the good and have less strength of will to do that which we know to be right.!

The Apostle Paul summarized it well when he wrote, “May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The One who calls you is faithful, and He will do it” (1 Thes. 5:23, 24).



commitment

God's Greatest Material Gift—Our Bodies



Gary Fraser

Gary Fraser, M.D., PHD (Cardiology), is currently Professor of Epidemiology and Professor of Medicine at Loma Linda University, also director of the Adventist Health Study. He is a native of New Zealand, and is married to Sharon with four grown children.

Arguably the human body, in particular our brain, is the most complex entity known in the universe. Under high magnification, the ultrafine detail of cells and organs, and how they all work together, is truly overwhelming. Yet this wonderful gift belongs to each of us. Surely such a marvelous gift comes with considerable responsibility. So it is that our understanding of creation and of our magnanimous God naturally leads to seeing a close relationship between religion and the stewardship of our bodies in both their physical and mental aspects.

Although there are other religions that recognize these things, this natural association is probably most highly developed among Adventists. Despite this, the health practices among Adventists are not uniform. Nevertheless, it is this somewhat unfortunate fact that allows us, in the Adventist Health Study* to examine the effects of different choices about lifestyle on subsequent disease experience. Adventists can be divided in many ways: vegetarians (of different types), non-vegetarians, their use of particular foods, exercise habits, body weight indices, church attendance, religious coping-styles, and more. People in each of these categories have different rates of several common diseases, and also of life expectancy.

While health is no measure of spirituality, it seems appropriate, from a spiritual perspective, that we should safeguard the integrity of our bodies in order to maximize function, satisfaction and pleasure, for as long as possible. It is true that genetic predisposition, and often what seems to be just malign chance, can govern the individual health-experience. Up until the latter half of the 20th century, “God’s will” or simply fate, was generally considered an adequate explanation of health-experience and survival. Now, in great contrast to this, these things are understood to be substantially under our control and influenced by our own choices. Even when there is a strong familial predisposition to certain disorders (relatively uncommon) the way we live will act on top of this to extend even a relatively poor outlook.

Good vegetarians eventually “pass on to their rest.” Healthy living does not prevent most chronic diseases, but instead delays them—often by up to 10 years. So it is that Adventists, as represented in the Adventist Health Study, enjoy, on average, greater life expectancy, and these extra years are generally of good quality. In the end, however, we develop most of the same afflictions—just much later. We have, as a people, enjoyed these marvelous and valuable benefits now for more than 100 years—at least this is true for those Adventists who choose to be guided by our health message. Unfortunately our research shows that even Adventists, on average, are losing about 5 years of potential life resulting from less than ideal choices about how they live their lives.

Then there are the “vegetarian wars.” Which is best, vegan (eat no animal products) or lacto-ovo vegetarianism (eat dairy and/or eggs)? There are strongly held opinions that are sometimes based on presumed health effects but perhaps in some cases, are built more on arguments of attaining greater moral or spiritual purity. In my view these latter motivations are ill-founded. We find in Romans 14:17 (NKJV), and several other supporting verses, a key principle: “For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” I will not here address the issue of possibly different health effects either, as it is a little early in our study to yet be sure. It is interesting to point out, however, that on average the Adventist lacto-ovo-vegetarians are not so far removed from the vegans, in that they typically have low intakes of dairy and eggs. Nevertheless vegans do have somewhat higher intakes of fruit and vegetables, and



commitment

of the various nutrients and vitamins that go along with this.

What does the study tell us about the health experience of Adventist vegetarians (different types grouped together) as compared to Adventist non-vegetarians who eat meats at least once per week? There are major differences, despite the fact that the non-vegetarians are eating, on average, less than 2 ounces of meat (red and white together) each day. In our Western society of excessive caloric intake, the vegetarians are much thinner, although it is only the vegans who on average are not still overweight. The vegetarians have less diabetes, hypertension, and a lower frequency of high cholesterol. Typically the vegetarian advantage translates to a risk of about 30 to 50 percent lower than the non-vegetarian Adventists. So these are all cardiovascular risk factors. Does this translate to a lower risk of heart attack, as we may expect? **Our best look at this so far comes from the older AHS-1 study of 34,000 Adventists in California, USA, and there the risk of heart attack was indeed 40-50% lower in the vegetarians.**

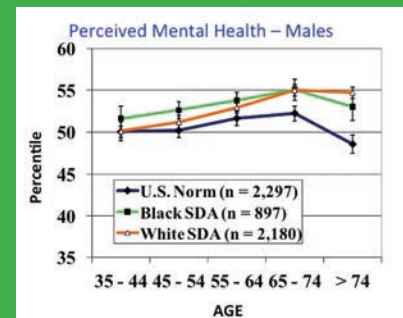
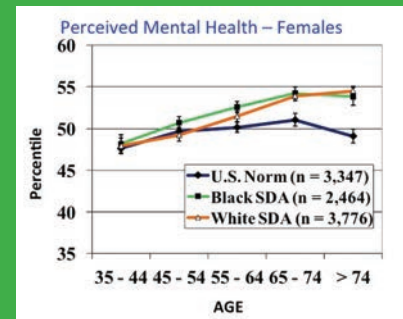
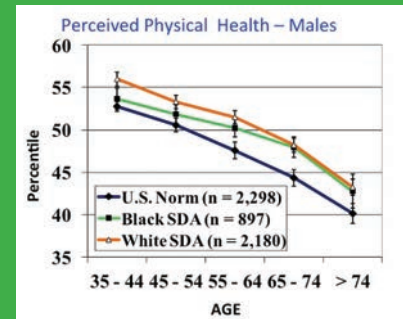
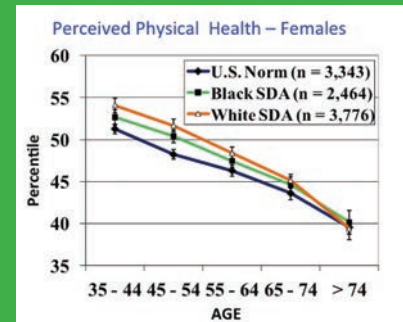
Cancer is not a single disease as cancers at different body sites (breast, colon, etc.), have different causes, although some of these often overlap. Not all cancers are sensitive to diet. Within the next year the cancer results from our present AHS-2 study will be published. It is clear that colorectal cancer is lower in vegetarians, and this is no surprise as many studies (including AHS-1) have agreed that red meat consumption increases risk of this cancer substantially. Overall we find that the Adventist vegetarians have 10-12% less cancer than the non-vegetarians, but this varies a good deal from cancer to cancer. We are not aware yet of any cancers that are more frequent in the vegetarians but for some there will be no clear advantage and for other cancers there will be a 20-40% decreased risk for the vegetarians. Look for further details to be published soon.

Loma Linda, the town surrounding the Adventist university and medical institution of the same name, has become somewhat famous as the only American “Blue Zone.” This is a term coined by National Geographic writer Dan Buettner, and refers to areas on the earth where there is unusual longevity. Actually it is not really Loma Linda, but Adventists all over the state of California (from the AHS-1 study) who contributed to this striking observation. Specifically, Adventist men live more than seven years longer than non-Adventist Californian men, and Adventist women about four and a half years longer than non-Adventist counterparts. These are large differences. Moreover, as shown in Figure 1, for both physical and mental quality of life, at virtually every age, for both men and women, Adventists (both Black and White) do better than United States’ national norms. So, fewer diseases not only improves longevity, but ensures that the extra years are of relatively good quality, on average.

Although I focus here on eating and diet, which are important influences on health, there are other factors to be considered. **Regular physical activity, preserving at least some strong social relationships, and certain aspects of religious belief and observance, all have significant effects.** Our present analyses lead us to believe that the influence of religious commitment is most marked on mental health.

In summary, Adventism is a strong force for improved health maintenance. This comes from the recommendations and social pressures favoring a plant-based diet as well as from the teaching of food preparation skills. Changes in attitudes and values that come from having a spiritual connection, and a healthy lifestyle that we adopt, do matter. Finally, there is the mental benefit of social support that comes from belonging to a close-knit group, and the positive influence of a right relationship with God. Overall, a package beyond value!

Adventist Health Study-1 Data Graphs



young adult

A Temple Steward's Identity



Shauna Chung

Shauna Chung, 22, graduated from Southern Adventist University in Tennessee, USA, with degrees in English and Music. Since age three, she has wanted to be a teacher and hopes to pursue graduate work in English in order to be an educator for as long as God allows it. She teaches conversational English in South Korea.

I have a split identity. Though my heritage is Korean, I'm as American as they come—proudly pledging allegiance to the flag, eating Tofurky (vegetarian substitute) and mashed potatoes for Thanksgiving, and learning solely English from the moment I could speak. Having recently moved to Korea to teach middle school English, however, I have begun to call my identity into question.

Adapting to Korean culture has been complicated. Despite sharing the physical characteristics of the local Koreans, I differ from the general

Random thought...

...How does it change my thoughts and behavior when I remember the Holy Spirit lives in me—God's temple?

population owing to my inability to speak Korean. At first, I felt defensive of my American identity that was constantly proverbially at war with my almond-shaped eyes, dark hair, and olive skin. My pride kept encouraging me to close my mind and remain the same. Realizing that this was ineffective, I eventually swallowed my self-importance, thinking that sheer mimicry could help me assimilate myself into the culture instead; however, no matter how much I tried to look like a local in dress and mannerisms, I was still an “outsider.” It became apparent the moment anyone tried to speak to me. “I don't speak Korean. I'm from America,” became my mantra.

All of this changed when I began teaching. Suddenly, my ability to speak English was useful, and I no longer had to impersonate to feel accepted. Watching the students respond to my lessons and hearing their English improve became such an encouragement. In fact, the moment I fully grew into my new role, **I found my identity crisis to be a non-issue. My service gave me purpose instead** and I became committed to using my language abilities to facilitate my students' learning.

In much the same way, **becoming stewards of the “temple of God” involves a similar identity transformation.** Physically, we share the appearance of God, being made in His image (Gen. 1:27). This body, according to 1 Corinthians 6:19, is His temple—not a castle surrounded by a moat, protected by a fire-breathing dragon. Too often, however, we become more like fortresses of pride than sanctuaries where the Holy Spirit can abide. When this proves ineffective, we start believing that being stewards of the temple—the house of the Lord—can be accomplished through correctness: eating healthfully, abstaining from bad habits, having daily devotions, being temperate in all things. While these are all good and integral parts of the Christian lifestyle, one cannot simply go through the motions to claim the identity of being the “steward of the temple.” **One must realize that true stewardship is first an inward commitment to, and, focus on, Jesus that results in outward service.**

In *The Desire of Ages*, Ellen G. White states, “Every human being, in body, soul, and spirit is the property of God. Christ died to redeem all” (p. 488). God chose us, fought for us and deliberately decided to set up camp in our feeble, imperfect bodies. As believers in this truth, who are we to reject Him with our pride or replace him with routine, seemingly correct actions? Instead, we should find identity in our work for the Lord—honoring His sacrifice by sharing our God-given talents with others. This new self-perception allows the Holy Spirit to find a hospitable place to reside, a place where he can truly transform us from within. Through this physical, emotional and spiritual service to Christ, we honor Him with our bodies, making us true stewards of the temple of God.



Tithe and the Storehouse

“LET US REASON TOGETHER”

Whose tithe is it any way? “In the beginning God created” (Gen. 1:1, *NKJV*). “All things were made by him....” (Jn. 1:3). As Creator, God Owns Everything!

THE TITHE

God’s Word informs us that six generations before there was a law, Abram “gave...tithes of all” to Melchizedek (Gen. 14:20); Jacob voluntarily pledged “of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee,” at Bethel (Gen. 28:22); and God instructed the Israelites, “bring forth all the tithe of thine increase.” (Deut. 14:22).

God prescribed the ‘storehouse’ for the tithe (Deut. 12). Initially this was the temporary sanctuary; later the temple replaced the sanctuary (Neh. 10:37). Malachi 3:10 instructs, “Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse.” **In the modern setting His ‘church’ is considered to be the ‘storehouse.’ For distribution purposes, the Adventist church has designated the local conference as the ‘storehouse.’**

God directed that the tithe was intended for the Levites for “the service of the tabernacle” and in lieu of an inheritance for them in the Promised Land (Num. 18:21, 24).

THE CHURCH’S TITHE?

The Seventh-day Adventist church follows God’s instruction for the use of the tithe. General Conference *Working Policy* V 05 05 reads, “The tithe is to be held sacred for:

- The work of the ministry
- Bible teaching,
- This includes conference, mission, field administration in the care of churches
- Field outreach operations

Every Sabbath faithful church members turn in tithe at their local church and the church treasurer remits it to the local conference in total. The local conference treasurer pays the authorized salaries and expenses of the pastors serving the local churches, and contributes predetermined percentages to the employees’ Retirement Fund. Local churches receive further support from the Conference through assistance from administrators and departments, in public evangelism, health ministry, church schools, and more.

The ‘church’ is a temporary repository, a channel, for the disbursement of tithe.

YOUR TITHE?

As Creator, God owns everything and gives power to get wealth. Our heavenly Father blesses us with material goods, talents, opportunities, and privileges (Js. 1:17). “...the LORD thy God...it is He that giveth thee power to get wealth ...” (Deut. 8:18).

Periodically, a church member may conclude that something in ‘the church’ is not what it ought to be, or a leader is considered to be guilty of some improbity, and the member may be inclined to ‘withhold my tithe, until ...!’ Concern about God’s church is commendable, but (1) it is not ‘my’ tithe to withhold, and (2) procedures are available to resolve such issues.

Returning tithe is an imperative; it is only conditional on having ‘an increase.’ Tithing is not a lateral or horizontal transaction; it is, demonstrably, evidence of a relationship with our Creator.



Eric Korff

Eric Korff (CPA) served the Adventist church for 44 years since 1984, as a union accountant, conference treasurer, union auditor, college treasurer and division auditor in Southern Africa, and a General Conference auditor. He retired in 2007 having served as director of the General Conference Auditing Service for 12 years.

GOD’S TITHE!

God’s requirement is clear: “Bring forth all the tithe of thine increase...[it] is the LORD’S: it is holy unto the LORD.” He is blatantly straightforward in His inquiry through Malachi 3:8: “Will a man rob God?...But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.”

God has ordained a divine-human partnership to finance His Kingdom; He owns everything (Ps. 50:10; Hag. 2:8), but has made mankind custodian and caretaker or steward of His creation.

God speaks to us: “Consider your ways. Ye have sown much, and bring in little;...and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes” (Hag. 1:6, 8); “Come now, and let us reason together: If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land” (Isa. 1:18, 19).

Faith, Gratitude, Joy and Healing

"Nothing tends more to promote health of body and of soul than does a spirit of gratitude and praise. It is a positive duty to resist melancholy, discontented thoughts and feelings—as much a duty as it is to pray. If we are heaven-bound, how can we go as a band of mourners, groaning and complaining all along the way to our Father's house?"

... It is a law of nature that our thoughts and feelings are encouraged and strengthened as we give them utterance. While words express thoughts, it is also true that thoughts follow words. If we would give more expression to our faith, rejoice more in the blessings that we know we have,—the great mercy and love of God,—we should have more faith and greater joy. No tongue can express, no finite mind can conceive, the blessing that results from appreciating the goodness and love of God. Even on earth we may have joy as a wellspring, never failing, because fed by the streams that flow from the throne of God" (The Ministry of Healing by Ellen G White, pp. 251-253).

"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things" (Philippians 4:4-8).