

DYNAMIC Steward

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April-June, 2014

Stewards of Influence

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DYNAMIC Steward



My all in response to God's all!

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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

Agents of Change



Larry R. Evans
Associate Director,
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Change is seldom easy, and Jesus knew this. While addressing the cost of being a true disciple, He shared an illustration about salt. "Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again?" (Lk. 14:34). Jesus knew that the changes that were needed could not be legislated. He sought to develop a new kind of disciple to help pave the way. They were to become agents of change. He worked to set into action a new set of values and for this to happen He needed to prepare the disciples for a new way of thinking and living. He led the way.

The challenge of values continues today. This issue of the *Dynamic Steward* is about "Stewards of Influence" and salt is an insightful metaphor for agents of change.

The verses leading to the salt illustration make it clear that Jesus sought to influence, and bring about a change, in the values cherished by the disciples. Later their own words indicated that He had been successful when they admitted that they had something more valuable than "silver and gold" to offer (Acts 3:6). **Their encounter with Jesus changed their orientation, their priorities and, certainly, their worldview. The context of the salt illustration was all about being willing to sacrifice, but it hardly seemed sacrificial to them now.** They had learned the same values that helped Christ withstand His wilderness temptations (Lk. 4). Power, recognition, success and comfort were not the decision-makers for Him. Jesus made it clear that there were only two things that really mattered in His life—God and people. He was willing to endure hardships so that God and people might be honored, even if it created a disadvantage for Himself. He came as a servant for both, and this put Him at odds with the Pharisees in at least three ways.

First, while the Pharisees focused on oral traditions regarding purification, Jesus focused on the "more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness" (Mt. 23:23). Secondly, though Jesus was active in Sabbath services, religious activity was no substitute for demonstrating that everyone is someone to God, regardless of how society or culture might see them. A third distinctive value that was evident in the life of Jesus was that, by coming to Him, all would be treated like royalty. He treated everyone who was willing to listen, as if they had untapped potential. Despite His holiness, sinners of all types were drawn to Him.

The influence of Jesus changed lives and gave hope, not only to those in His generation, but to ours as well. Being fashioned by Jesus into His image is radical. **Without this departure from conventional values, the Pharisees were not only without personal peace, but also without a message to share.**

Jesus sought to change this, and to do so, He called and prepared a corps of disciples to become agents of change. Salt does very little in isolation. Salt serves, salt enhances, salt preserves but salt's purpose is always found in relationship with something or someone. Influence comes not from a desire to be "influential" but from what one is and is becoming. Biblical stewards become stewards of influence because two things matter to them: God and people. It is then that salt becomes flavourful.

Editor

resources

No matter our age, or the age we live in, the idea of sitting at the feet of someone telling a story, brings back feelings of childhood awe, trust, and expectation.

Passion, Purpose & Power is an open invitation to all ages, to sit and listen as these stories—told by the Adventist pioneers themselves—paint a picture of real people and their lives. These are stories of total commitment and incredible sacrifices that only true stewards of Jesus, with a dedication to His purposes and the power of the Holy Spirit, can generate! Draw close to the fireside of this second edition (updated and expanded), and find yourself aglow with inspiration.

Come, listen, and you might just hear the God of the pioneers call your name, sense a revival in your heart, and feel a renewed sense of mission in your life—one that draws from you a similar spirit of sacrifice and commitment!

***Passion, Purpose & Power, Recapturing the Spirit of the Adventist Pioneers Today*, edited by James Nix. GC Stewardship Ministries, www.adventiststewardship.com, or www.adventsource.org**



Gabe Lyons is optimistic that Christianity’s best days are yet to come. As co-author, his best-seller, *UnChristian*, revealed the pervasiveness of culture’s growing disregard for Christians. Now, in *The Next Christians*, Lyons shows how a new wave of believers is turning the tide by bringing the truth of the Gospel to bear on our changing, secular society.

“Restorers,” as Lyons calls them, approach culture with a different mentality than generations past. Informed by truth, yet seasoned with grace and love, these believers engage the world by drawing it to the sensibility and authenticity of the Christian life.

You can be one of these “next” Christians and change the negative perception of Christianity by living a life that is faithful to the gospel, yet credible and coherent to your friends and neighbors.

Find out if you are a “Restorer” by reading the book and engaging the conversation.

***The Next Christians: Seven Ways You Can Live the Gospel and Restore the World*, by Gabe Lyons. www.nextchristians.com.**

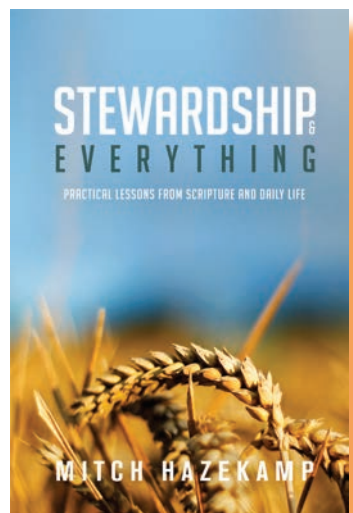


Countless attempts have been made to define stewardship. Author Mitch Hazekamp’s picture of stewardship is all-encompassing: God and all of His creation; a star-filled sky on a clear, dark night; a snow-covered mountain peak towering heavenward against a blue sky; a cascading waterfall plunging into a pool of icy water; the vastness of a desert sweltering in the heat of the day with the teeming multitudes attempting to eke out a life in the midst of privation; a jam-packed interstate overflowing with cars and trucks while an emergency vehicle screams through the traffic, sirens blaring, attempting to save a life.

In this book, Hazekamp shares lessons he has learned about stewardship—from stewardship in our personal lives and families to our wallets, church life, outreach, and ministry. Lessons are illustrated with scripture references and stories from Hazekamp’s life.

The bottom line: stewardship is all about God and everything He has created.

***Stewardship & Everything: Practical Lessons from Scripture and Daily Life*, by Mitch Hazekamp. Find it on www.adventsource.org.**



The content or opinions expressed, implied or included in or with these resources are solely those of the authors and not those of the publishers of the Dynamic Steward. The publishers do however, advocate these resources on the basis of their rich contributions to the area of stewardship ministry, and assume that readers will apply their own critical evaluations as they make use of them.

Christ: The Fragrance of the Christian Life



Erika F. Puni
*Director,
GC Stewardship Ministries*

My son, Jaydon, and I were in the car in COSTCO's parking lot, waiting for a vehicle to pull out so we could pull into its space. We assumed that the parked car would be leaving at any moment because the driver had loaded her shopping bags and had returned the trolley. We could see the reverse lights at the rear of the car, which indicated that the driver was ready to drive off. The reality, however, was different. The car was not moving and I was impatient with the wait. Immediately behind our car were a number of other vehicles waiting for me to move, and, of course, I was waiting for the parked car to pull out. Being aware of other drivers waiting did add to the sense of urgency to do something, even though I knew there was nothing I could do, but wait.

The wait felt like an eternity. I started to mumble to myself, expressing my frustration that the parked car was still not moving. Unbeknownst to me, Jaydon, who is only five, was sitting and watching my reaction from the back seat. He heard the words I was saying. Spontaneously, and unrehearsed, Jaydon calmly said to me, "Daddy, be patient."

Feeling rather disappointed with my reaction to the situation, I responded sheepishly, "I'm sorry, son." At that moment, I knew that I had been wrong as a Christian parent. I had behaved in a manner that was contrary to what we have taught our children, and what we expect them to do in similar circumstances. For me, that learning-moment was also a reminder of the quiet but powerful impact of the personal influence we all have on others, irrespective of whether our actions and reactions are intentional. Our influence—the way we live and conduct our lives as Christian stewards in the world—can be a positive or negative force that will affect someone's life and choices for now and into the future (2 Corinthians 2:15).

Personal Influence

The Bible deals with the issue of personal influence quite extensively. The Christian perspective is highlighted well in 1 Corinthians 10:31-33: "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God—even as I try to please everyone in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many so that they may be saved." Paul's counsel to the Christians in Corinth is still valid for us today. We are each part of a community, and it is important that our influence represents Christ. We must keep before us the goal of helping others to experience Jesus, and be saved for His eternal kingdom.

Parental Influence

In their sojourn from Egypt to Canaan, Moses continued to remind the Israelites of the importance of loving God fully. Being part of His covenant-people was a total lifetime commitment. It was not limited to only one day of the week—the Sabbath. This emphasis was clearly articulated in these words, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up" (Deuteronomy 6:4-7). From the writings of Moses, we see how God desires this message to be communicated and passed on to children, and even to the next generations. In the work of religious education, parents are charged with the spiritual responsibility of leading, and influencing, their young ones in the way of the Lord. This is Christian stewardship.

Influence Does Matter

The call to accept Jesus as our Savior and Lord is really an invitation to submit every facet of our lives to the rule of His Spirit daily. This is a reminder that, as Christians, we do not live our lives in a vacuum or in isolation from other people. What we do, even in private, can influence someone's destiny for eternity. Additionally, we recognize that as stewards and partners with God, we are placed here on earth for His purpose, and that purpose is to live out His glory.

From the Director's Desk...

In 2013, the Northern Tanzania Union Conference was established within the East Central Africa Division. In partnership with the division and the union, the Stewardship Ministries of the General Conference, conducted a stewardship convention in the city of Arusha, in February 2014. This weekend event brought together more than a thousand participants, which included administrators, pastors and lay leaders from all over the union territory. The event provided stewardship education and inspiration for leaders in order to help them in their work of discipling and nurturing members. It was also an opportunity for leadership mentoring and teambuilding for regional stewardship directors.



The General Conference Stewardship Ministries and Trust Services partnered to conduct a stewardship advisory and convention for the Swaziland Conference in March of this year. This was an initiative of the Southern Africa Union Conference, supported by the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division. Presenters for the two programs included Aniel Barbe (SID Stewardship Ministries Director), Paul Shongwe (SAUC Stewardship Ministries Director), Wilfredo Sumagaysay (GC Trust and Planned Giving), as well as Mario Niño and Erika Puni from GC Stewardship Ministries. Over a thousand people attended the Sabbath program which included pastors, local church leaders and Adventist members of the Swazi royal family.



interview

Opportunities of Influence



Richard Hart interviewed by Larry R. Evans, Editor of Dynamic Steward

Dr. Richard Hart currently serves as President of Loma Linda University Health. He earned his Doctor of Medicine degree at Loma Linda University in 1970, followed by a Doctor of Public Health in International Health at Johns Hopkins University in 1977. Dr. Hart is board certified in preventive medicine.

Dr. Hart has served Loma Linda University since 1972, including serving as Chair of the School of Public Health's Department of Health Sciences, Director of the Center for Health Promotion, Chair of the School of Medicine's Department of Preventive Medicine, Dean of the School of Public Health, and President (previously Chancellor) and CEO of the University.



Himalayan Salt

LRE: Tell us a little of the overall scope of your role as president of Loma Linda University.

RH: It's a little bit complicated. There are three core corporations here—the university with eight professional schools, the medical center with six hospitals, and the faculty medical group with 850 doctors. We have recently simplified our corporate name, Loma Linda University Adventist Health Sciences Center, to Loma Linda University Health. So my title currently is president of LLUH, the parent company, and by virtue of that I'm the president of the university and of the medical center.

LRE: Who or what would you say has had the greatest influence in your life?

RH: That's a hard question to answer. I grew up in the rural Northwest where my dad was a classic country doctor. I worked on the local farms, and I would say the stability in my life probably comes from my connection with nature, gardening, and farming. That's when I have my best thoughts. We live on seven acres now, which I care for, including cutting and splitting four or five cords of wood a winter to heat our home. That's my therapy.

During my freshman year in medicine I was introduced to public and global health. The light went on and I said, "That's me!" This whole big picture view of the world's needs just clicked with me. It clearly inspired me to go abroad for my professional career and to get the degrees and training I did.

Several influenced me when I came back and joined the School of Public Health. The years I worked with Lyn Behrens when she was in this office were influential years. Her public acknowledgement of the need for God's leadership in making major decisions made a real impression. We would often kneel around this table as a committee in prayer and ask, "What are we going to do with this issue?"

LRE: You began with a one-on-one approach to medicine but are now faced with huge administrative responsibilities. Has this been a difficult transition?

RH: Well, I still see patients. I just came from clinic this morning, so I value that part of my life. But I find fascination in trying to strategize how to manage a system or committee. Right now, we are at the beginning of a complete reorganization of Loma Linda, trying to simplify how we function as an organization. That's fun for me. I enjoy strategizing, "OK, if we make this move, what will happen? How would it be viewed over there? What can we do better? How can we influence things more effectively? That's where an awful lot of my creative energy goes—trying to figure out strategies and how to move a system forward.

LRE: Are there certain personal characteristics in others that you have found most influential?

RH: I chair a lot of search



committees, looking for key leaders for Loma Linda. So I get a chance to interview people, listen to them, trying to identify what they are saying that could help me know whether they're the right person for the job. Out of that I've coined the term, "the reluctant leader." I find myself intuitively wanting someone that says, "Yes, I have the confidence to do this, but I also need to learn." There's a certain humility about life that I'm looking for. I want somebody that comes in and says, "Well, I need to listen carefully to others to make sure I'm making the right decision." This idea of a reluctant leader is something that I find critical when I'm trying to recruit key people.

LRE: Can an organization like Loma Linda enhance the influence of its students and graduates?

RH: I believe the answer is absolutely yes. In the past, Loma Linda has largely excelled in producing strong graduates, wishing them well, and sending them out to serve. I've said many times, "Loma Linda has great credibility, but that doesn't do us any good unless we use it." We have found that by having Loma Linda maintain organizational links with its graduates, we can nurture their interests. We can help them be much more effective. This has impacted our graduates who work around the world.

LRE: What kind of influence do you want the university to have?

RH: Loma Linda is where the church meets the world every day because of our healthcare activities. We are where Adventist beliefs come face to face with the real issues of life. We not only want to educate our students but also help them work through their theology in the context of real life. Characters are developed best when human need is confronted and decisions are made how to respond. One of the very deliberate things we do on this campus is to create what we call "teachable moments." We will place students in settings where they are forced to evaluate their own values and ask, "Why do I feel this way? What is this all about?" How should I respond? Doing this with a coach or mentor can give a reference point that is invaluable for each student. Professional character can then be developed. One of the things I've said many times is, "Who you are is more important than what you know." This is classical Ellen White—the development of character is what really makes the difference for life. I believe this is best done in a service setting where human needs are encountered. Stepping across a cultural boundary often brings this kind of reflection. It peels away our biases and makes us more sensitive to issues. This creates an ideal learning opportunity.

LRE: Just because a person is a leader with influence doesn't mean they are exempt from making mistakes. Nevertheless, have you observed common attributes among those you would call influential?

RH: As I've told my kids, it isn't the person who falls down that is in trouble; it's the person who doesn't get back up. I've had a number of circumstances in my life where I made a mistake, or the system didn't support my perspective. You kind of accept those days and say, "OK, that's a hard hit today, but tomorrow will be better," and you move on. I greatly value people who act out of a commitment to something bigger than themselves. They have core values and a sense of integrity. So often, particularly in healthcare, it is easy for finances to control the decisions we make. We often find ourselves saying, "This is the right thing to do even if it costs us money, or it doesn't make financial sense. We've got to do it anyway."

LRE: What do you see as one of the greatest threats to this kind of influence?

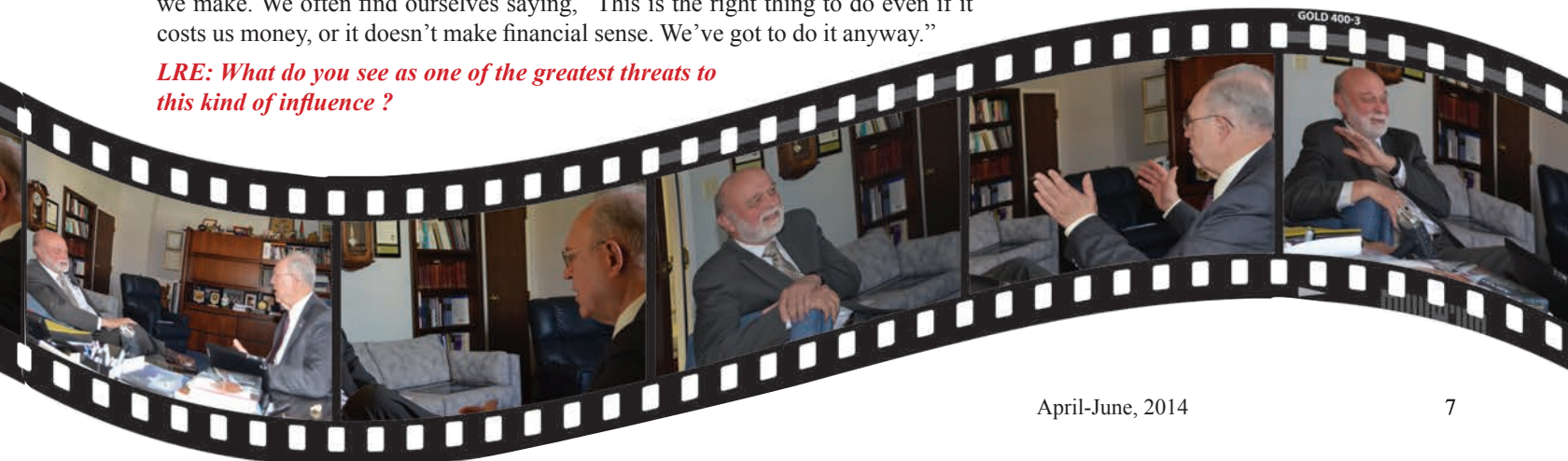
RH: As I look at the world today, I would certainly say materialism and the desire for personal gain is a huge threat and probably the one thing I worry about most for our students. They graduate with a professional credential and have the entire world wanting them. So how is that balanced with an understanding of the gospel commission and the need to serve the world—in both an evangelistic and a humanitarian sense?

LRE: You have worked hard to assure that the medical missionary mindset is part of Loma Linda. Why is that so important to you?

RH: People often look at Loma Linda and talk about the wonderful things we do for the world church. I would argue just the other way around. What wonderful opportunities the world church gives us! If we did not have those service opportunities, it would fundamentally change the character of Loma Linda. So I can honestly say to our students, "The world needs you. They're waiting for you." This greatly impacts who we are here at Loma Linda. I hope we never lose that, because it's an invaluable privilege we have in this church.

LRE: Is there anything you would like to add to that?

RH: For those in visible leadership positions, it's pretty humbling to know how many people are watching what you do. I often have people come up and say, "Dr. Hart, I pray for you every day." That is very humbling. It is more of a burden for me than even the administrative decisions that weigh on me. I keep asking myself, "Am I being honest and responsive to the expectations that others have of me?"



What Do I Still Lack?



Hugo Chinchay, Sr.

Hugo F. Chinchay, Sr., MBA, is Director of Stewardship & Trust Services at Potomac Conference of SDA. Born in Perú, he studied in both Perú and México, before doing Business Administration at La Sierra University. He has worked at the Loma Linda Hospital, Academy and University, as well as at La Sierra University. He is married to Eunice who is an RN, and they have two sons.

When we first read the story of the young ruler in Matthew 19:16-23, we may not see any personal applications. After all, we are not millionaires, politicians or highly influential leaders. Nevertheless, we are left with the question, “Why then was this story shared?” Further study, however, reveals that this Bible story does have relevance for our time.

When I read this story from a personal perspective, I was surprised to discover at least two realities that connect this story with my own personal Christian journey. First, it is not enough just to come to Jesus, and second, it is not enough to come to

Jesus, even with sincerity.

A comparison between the rich young ruler and a long term Adventist church member like myself, reveals some striking similarities. Here is what I found: We would both be considered good Sabbath keepers; we both understand the sanctuary-service message; we both uphold the law of God; and, we both belong to the remnant of God in our age. *He* looked forward to the Advent of the Messiah, and *we* look forward to Jesus’ second coming. We both frequent God’s house to worship Him; we both have set religious traditions and a rich heritage, and think of ourselves as religiously ‘rich.’ The list of similarities could go on.

Somehow, this mirror-like list gave me a feeling of superiority—much like the rich, young ruler—especially with regard to our biblical knowledge as a church. We are reminded that the rich young ruler’s two most significant areas of wealth were money and religion.

Coming to Jesus Is Not Enough

Despite the appearance of having everything that was needed to make him ‘perfect and happy,’ the rich young ruler was spiritually ‘empty.’ He saw in Jesus someone who could fill the void in his religious life. So he went to Jesus. But just going to Him was not enough. Ellen White explains that, “This ruler had a high estimate of his own righteousness. He did not really suppose that he was defective in anything, yet he was not altogether satisfied. He felt the want of something that he did not possess” (*Desire of Ages*, p. 518).

As he came running and knelt to ask a question, Jesus first called attention to the fact that he had called him “Good” which can only refer to God. This title was, however, only given as a compliment (Good Master), and not with a spirit of adoration. He had no sense of the sin in his soul. All he wanted was affirmation that his clean moral-life was good enough for him to enter into heaven. Complimenting Jesus is not the same as worshiping Him, or recognizing Him as our Lord and Savior—with a humble heart.

His understanding was that eternal life was based on what he did, and how he did it was the measure of his success. It is not unusual for the overly religious to tell others what to do, how to worship, how to live and how to act, in any given situation and at any particular time. These individuals come to Jesus, not for Him to be their Savior, but to use Him as their consultant or advisor. They come to Jesus, not as their Creator, God or Redeemer, but as a teacher who can give the prize student an “A.”

Coming to Jesus with Sincerity Is Not Enough

The problem with the young ruler was not sincerity. Rather, he stumbled over a lack of his own understanding, and his need. His sincerity wasn’t enough. “He felt a desire to be his disciple. He was so deeply moved that as Christ was going on His way, he ran after Him, and kneeling at His feet, asked with sincerity and



Masala



Cinnamon



Aniseed



Turmeric

earnestness the question so important to his soul and to the soul of very human being” (*Desire of Ages*, p. 518).

At this point, Jesus addressed the man’s overly religious inclinations and gave him the easiest and most obvious answer, “Keep the commandments” (v. 17).

I sense, at this point, how the young ruler’s heart pounded with excitement. It was as if Jesus’ answer fit with his own expectations. To make things even more exciting, he asked, “Which ones?” (v. 18). Jesus then recited five of the last six commandments and added, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (v.19). To which he happily responded, “All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?” (v. 20).

I qualify, I made it, he must have thought, excited. But his reasoning and his human qualifications were his downfall. Such a conclusion was spiritually fatal. Sincerity was not enough.

How can I avoid falling into the same trap today? What sort of things are, nonetheless, important? What would Jesus mention today? What about going to church every Sabbath, learning the 28 SDA Fundamental Beliefs, studying our lesson quarterly, reading our daily devotional, not drinking, not smoking, not gambling, not behaving immorally, not lying, returning God’s tithe and giving our offerings faithfully, not eating unclean foods, becoming a vegetarian, practicing the right style of worship, dressing appropriately, participating in Sabbath School, joining missions trips whenever possible? We could continue. To this list, we would probably answer: “All of these things I have kept since I became an Adventist! I qualify! I think I’ve made it!”

Wow, what a coincidence. All of a sudden I realize how closely I resemble the rich young ruler. We both rely on our human achievements and our religious heritage as a way to qualify for heaven, but we also both need to remind ourselves that we can’t rely on our high standards, good morals, appropriate style of worship or healthy lifestyle, as qualifications for earning eternal life, nor in order to fill that spiritual void.

What Do I Still Lack Then?

Finally, Jesus looks at him with love and answers his deep question: “If you want to be perfect, then go. “Go” is a verb, an action-word, which requires just that: an action, a decision, something that he must do right now in order to understand the core concept of religion.

Then Jesus asks him to do something radical that, even today, sounds extremely difficult to digest: “Go, sell your possessions...” (v. 21). By that He meant everything, and “everything” doesn’t refer to the ten percent we normally argue about returning to God. Nor was it a double tithe of twenty percent. Jesus said “everything!” That’s one hundred percent.

Jesus didn’t stop there. He didn’t ask him to bring it to the coffers of the church. Rather He continued to say, “...and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come follow me” (*ibid.*).

The rich young ruler was not rejected by Jesus. Later, Jesus tells him to come and follow Him. “Christ read the ruler’s heart. Only one thing he lacked, but that was a vital principle. He needed the love of God in the soul. This lack, unless supplied, would prove fatal to him; his whole nature would become corrupted. By indulgence, selfishness would strengthen. That he might receive the love of God, his supreme love of self must be surrendered” (*Desire of Ages*, p. 518).

Jesus’ goal was not to make him financially poor. After all, his real problem

was being overly religious. Behavior and traditions overshadowed the very reason for his existence. We run the same risk today. We may be attending church without knowing why we go to church in the first place. The real question is why does the church exist?

The Love of God in My Heart

Jesus is the Almighty Creator of a universe that even scientists can’t measure, a universe so big that our own planet, Earth, becomes like an unnoticeable atom of dust. Yet we are on this planet. We are so much smaller and even more insignificant, but He still loves us. Because of us, Jesus descended, took on humanity, lived among us, suffered rejection by his own people, and died on the cross so that you and I need not die—because you and I matter too much to him, no matter how insignificant or small we are under His creation. “For God so loved the world that he gave His only son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (Jn. 3:16). That is the love of God! He wants to save the lost and He gave everything for that purpose. Anybody who wants to be His disciple must be willing to surrender everything to reach others.

The young ruler learned what kind of commitment was required from him in order to be a real disciple. He went away sad. It was not the money that kept him from making the decision, but rather the lack of love in his heart—love towards neighbors, a love for lost souls.

When we love the lost as Jesus does, then you and I will be willing to give it all up, rather than giving something to get something. The only purpose for which the church exists, is to save a lost world, to be the light of the world, the salt of the earth. The question remains: “Are we willing to give it all up for this cause?”



Corriander



Saffron



Cloves



Bay Leaf

The True Giving Spirit



Dr. Jairyong Lee
President,
Northern Asia-Pacific Division

Psalm 51:5 tells us that all people are born in this world sinful, and Romans 6:23 teaches that the wages of sin is death. Therefore, all human beings die—as a consequence of sin. As long as the sinful person stays within the jurisdiction of sin, he has no hope of eternal life.

Jesus succinctly explained to his night-visitor, Nicodemus, that the born-again experience is a condition of man's salvation. "No one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again" (Jn. 3:3). Through the 'born-again' experience, the human being moves from the kingdom of sin to the kingdom of righteousness.



Reborn to Share

When a person is born again in Christ, he or she naturally shares the blessings received from God with others. Ellen White wrote, "Every true disciple is born into the kingdom of God as a missionary" (*Desire of Ages*, p. 195). In other words, all regenerated Christians are to do missionary work.

Missionaries are the ones who share with others what they possess—things such as time, talents, material blessings and the everlasting gospel. Jesus said that sharing with others is the responsibility of His followers, "Freely you have received, freely give" (Mt. 10:8).

Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector in the town of Jericho. He was a rich man, yet he was not happy because his own countrymen considered him a great sinner. Then one day he met Jesus and repented of his sins and was completely changed. After his conversion experience, in the presence of the multitude, "Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, 'Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor'" (Lk. 19:8). Jesus did not tell him to sell his property and give half of it to the poor. It was Zacchaeus' spontaneous response to God when he was reborn in Christ. He was willing to share what he had with others. While the carnal heart is full of selfishness, the regenerated heart is filled with an unselfish, giving spirit.

Give and It Will Be Given to You

Jesus said, "Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap" (Lk. 6:38). God loves voluntary givers and abundantly rewards them.

God asks His people to faithfully give tithes and offerings to His storehouse, not to enrich Himself (*Testimonies*, Vol. 2, p. 653), but because He wants His people to develop a noble character by giving generously. He has promised to "pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it" (Mal. 3:10).

God gives to those who are constantly giving to others, so that they can have more blessings to share with other people. The Lake of Galilee is a good illustration of this point. It constantly receives fresh water from the upper valleys in the north. All kinds of living creatures enjoy a life of abundance in the lake. It constantly sends the water down to the Jordan River. By the constant receiving and giving of water it continues to maintain the power of life.

The Dead Sea, on the other hand, constantly receives water from various sources, including the Jordan River, but it does not send it on to others. Consequently, it becomes stagnant and decaying, and accordingly, living creatures cannot survive in it. It is dead! It reminds us how dangerous it is not to share God's blessings with others. Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). When we give, we will receive more abundantly.

God Loves Cheerful Givers

God does not receive anything from us if we give reluctantly, with a selfish heart. "Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:7). God accepts only freewill offerings (*Testimonies*, Vol. 3, p. 396). "The freewill offerings of the humble, contrite heart He will receive, and will reward the giver with the richest blessings" (*Testimonies*, Vol. 2, p. 653). When we give with a true and faithful giving spirit, God will grant us more abundant blessings as a consequence, not only materially but also in character.

The Steward's Influence

Although this article is entitled “The Steward’s Influence,” in reality it is all about God’s influence, which leads us to the question: “How does this influence manifest itself?”

God has a purpose and a plan for each of us. Even before we were created, a plan was in place for our participation in God’s mission. Each person has been carefully and uniquely equipped with personality and talents for the purpose of participating in the ‘Great Strategy’—God’s plan.

Fulfilling our part in God’s plan, requires both the appropriate attitude and action. Remember the young boy, Samuel, who made himself available to God? When God called him, Samuel answered: “Speak, for your servant is listening” (1 Sam. 3:10). God calls with a definite purpose and it is important for us to always have the attitude of being available.

Of course, the talents and the gifts that we receive need to be developed. David, for example, in the battle with Goliath, was driven by trust in God, and he used his unique talent: the ability of a laser-like focus and to accurately sling a stone at a target. He’d obviously had a lot of practice.

God used Esther, a courageous young woman of surpassing beauty, clear judgment, with remarkable self-control and self-sacrifice, to save her people in a time of crisis. Esther made herself available to God. Divine power was united with human effort. To fulfill her mission, she needed good preparation—first of all spiritually, but also practically. The preparation was an integral part of the success. Before the beautiful Esther was made queen, there was an extended period of purification and beauty treatments. Likewise, before the strategic conversation with the king, Esther took time to make her own preparations—she fasted and prayed, obtained the grace of the king and organized a banquet. By God’s providence and the influence of the “steward” named Esther, God’s people were restored to royal favor and delivered.

The examples of David and Esther remind us that the influence of the steward who remains in God’s hands has no limits. Everyone on earth is within the scope of Christ’s reach. The gospel is to be preached to every nation. Consequently, we cannot settle for anything less than what is expressed in His command or invitation.

The steward will always find herself/himself being influenced one way or another. No one is immune because of the controversy that is going on. We can’t opt out from it, even if we so choose. One or the other power has an influence on us at all times. No one remains immune. The part we play in the ‘Great Strategy’ is unique to every individual. Not everyone is called to be a pastor, or a governor, or an athlete, but all have an influence that God can use for His mission.

When I grew up, I discovered that God has given me the gift of “tongues,” i.e. the ability to easily learn other languages. When I was required to learn the Italian language in order to go and study in Italy, I dedicated up to 12 to 14 hours per day to learning. It was my part of the preparation for the work God would give me. I did not dream that one day (10 years later), I would be serving as an interpreter for the president of Italy during a state visit. God has no limits. He can use us wherever we are. **Truly, all that He needs is an attitude that allows us to be available, and a willingness to do the work of preparation and develop the talents He has given us.** He has marvelous ways in mind for using us and for giving to us an influence in service for Him and others.



Hella Milbreta-Holma

Hella, an Adventist lay member, has served many years as the member of the Trans-European Division Executive Committee, as Music leader in the Baltic Union and the Latvian Conference.

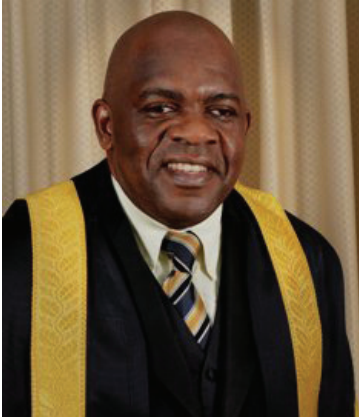
Hella is married and she is a happy mother of one son. She has a degree in Social Science and Law. She currently works as Team Director at an Austrian insurance company and is inspiring leaders to grow and to be willing to go the extra mile.

Previously, she worked for many years as an Italian-Latvian interpreter. Among her most important assignments as an interpreter have been the interpretation services during the State visits between the Presidents of Italy and Latvia. Hella is a board member of the Dante Alighieri Society in Latvia, and has won the Dante Alighieri Grand Prize for her contribution to the development of the economic and cultural relationships between Italy and Latvia.



commitment

Serving God—Serving People



*Senator the Hon. Floyd Morris,
President of the Jamaican Senate*

It is my fundamental belief that all men are created to serve God. In the process of creating us, God gave us dominion over all things. However, because of self, man allowed sin to separate us from God and the entire world has never been the same since. God, however, is a gracious being who is always willing to forgive and to save mankind from our destructive path. This is why He sent His only “begotten Son” to die and provide a restorative hope for us. The birth of Christ and His subsequent death, provides the opportunity for mankind to be redeemed and truly have dominion over the Earth. However, we have to rely solely on Jesus and this is why Philippians 4:13 is applicable: “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

Along this restorative process, God has put men and women in places of influence, to provide means of transformation, counsel, support, guidance and motivation for His people. He is always looking for moments to save us so that we can have the blessings of eternity. I can attribute my personal life-story to this.

In 1983, I developed glaucoma,

and after six years, my life was transformed into a pit of darkness. The life of a young, brilliant and energetic man was seemingly dismantled by one of the maladies of sin: a major eye disease, glaucoma. When I found myself in this precarious position, it was as though my world had come to an end. Hopes of becoming a Chartered Accountant were dashed. Hopes of driving a car were shattered and the hope of playing football and cricket, two of my favorite games; were also jettisoned. I was forced to question God. I never questioned His existence but I questioned Him as to why this was happening to me? What was I supposed to do that I never did? Recognizing how persons with disabilities are treated in society, what was He going to make happen to me in the future? I went through a period of “living hell” where I felt tormented and depressed.

But when one goes through situations like these, one must appreciate the fact that God allows us to go through the valley in order to take us to the mountain top. The experience of the Israelites in Egypt, when they encountered 400 years of bondage, was a means God used to prepare His people for greater things and for them to witness His awesome powers.

Looking back, I can unequivocally say that God brought me through the state of blindness because He had great plans in store for me: plans that I could not envisage or imagine. Because who in their rightful mind, 25 years ago, would imagine that, one day, a blind man, from a humble family background in the rural Parish of St. Mary, Jamaica, would rise to become the President of the Jamaican Senate? Who could ever have envisaged that, one day, a blind man whose life was transformed by glaucoma, would lead a Jamaican team to negotiate a major convention in the hallowed walls of the most powerful institution on Earth, the United Nations? Who could fathom that one day, this blind man would represent his country in several forums, in over 22 countries of the world? Only God could!

As I reflect on where I am today, and from whence I came, I realize that God allows things to happen for a purpose. One of my favorite Adventist pastors, Glen Samuels, who hails from the Jamaica Union, once retorted, “Where God puts a full stop, don’t dare place a comma!” I am happy that whilst I was going through my Job-like moments, I never questioned God’s existence. If I did, I am sure He would not have allowed all these blessing to be flowing upon me today, or for me to be transformed into a “steward of influence” in my beautiful country. It is good to question God; but it is foolish to question His existence. To do so is to surrender oneself to eternal damnation and public ridicule.

It is said that “to whom much is given, much is required.” God has given so much to me and I know within myself that He is requiring a whole lot from me. I view myself as a steward of His because I could not have accomplished all that I have over the past 25 years without His guiding hand. It was He who guided that nurse from the Port Maria Seventh-day Adventist Church to come and plant the seed of salvation in my life. It was He who led a young Adventist woman to the Jamaica Society for the Blind to volunteer and assist me with my education. It was He who brought me through school, without any major outlay of cash and I know that He did all of this because I had to depend on the brain that He had implanted in me. It was He who caused former Prime Minister of Jamaica, the Most Honourable P. J. Patterson, to appoint me as a senator in 1998, and then promote me to a Minister of State in 2001. It was He who, after seeing me pass through several failed relationships, led me to one of the most beautiful women ever created, at my



Sabbath School in Andrews Memorial Seventh-day Adventist Church, and to marry her in 2011. It is He who continues to guide me, inspite of being blind, to run 4-5 miles a day, with the aid of an assistant. And, it was His guiding hands who, after the Reverend Stanley Redwood resigned as President of the Jamaican Senate, caused my Senate colleagues, and the Most Honourable Prime Minister, Portia Simpson Miller, to repose the confidence in me to assume the fourth most powerful political office in the country, the President of the Jamaican Senate. God is truly awesome and worthy to be praised.

In recognizing my call to service, I spend my time advocating for improvements for social and economic justice for my other brothers and sisters who are disabled. The able-bodied have enough persons to advocate for them in the marketplace.

However, very few see fit to think about persons with disabilities. We are often treated as outcasts in society and seen as ones to be pitied and placed on welfare. This is not what God wants for His people. Of the recorded healings in the Bible, out of the 35 documented miracles, 27, (that's 80 percent), were done on persons with various types of disabilities. **I, therefore, view my elevation to this high office as a means for God to use me to influence change that would impact in a meaningful way on the lives of persons with disabilities.**

It was my joy and honour to have been a part of the team that negotiated for the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and to be the one who affixed my signature on that instrument in March 2007 and saw Jamaica becoming the first country in the world to both sign and ratify the first International Treaty of the new millennium. This year, Jamaica will enact the Disabilities Act that will serve to protect and assure the rights of the approximately 400,000 persons with disabilities on the island. To God be the glory, great things He continues to do. Indeed, I am committed to serve.



Hibiscus/Roselle - Jamaican Tea



...When last did I do a spontaneous act of kindness, or even an intentional one?

The Blessing of Blessing



Andrea Keele

Andrea Keele loves Jesus and working with missionaries in the Office of Volunteer Ministries at the North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

My friend, Sonya, loves to tell the story of her arrival at Southern Adventist University, in the United States, several years ago. It had been a long ride from Texas to Tennessee, squished in the backseat of an over-loaded Buick. The car was barely parked before Sonya bounded into the dorm to check-in, with all the nervous enthusiasm of a college freshman.

After finding her room, she took her first steps of independent adulthood—carrying loads of her stuff from the Buick to her new home. Sonya’s dad helped with the moving, while her mom sorted everything in her room. Soon, an older gentleman wearing a “We-Haul” T-shirt came by and asked if he could help. Sonya thought it was really nice that people

came out to help students move in, and she definitely needed it. There were lots of stairs, and she had lots of stuff. Gradually her dorm room filled with piles of random clothes still on hangers, her huge ancient desktop computer, giant stuffed fish, and everything else so important to college-freshman Sonya.

“Is that it?” the older gentlemen kindly asked on one of the last trips from the Buick. Sonya and her parents assured him they could get the rest, and thanked him for his help. After he left, Sonya’s dad asked her if she knew who that was.

“No,” she said, a little preoccupied with taking in her big, scary freshman world.

“That was the university president,” her dad said.

Sonya nearly choked. The university president had just finished helping her move all her crazy clothes, huge computer, and giant stuffed fish into her dorm room! **He had never introduced himself as the president, as someone who deserved her respect and attention. He had just helped her move in.** Needless to say, Sonya has been a pretty big fan of Dr. Bietz ever since.

Jesus taught about a kingdom where university presidents help nervous freshmen move into their dorm rooms. He taught about a kingdom where one must have the humility of a child to get in, and where the least are greatest, and the greatest are least. In this Kingdom, the only way to be a person of influence is to serve.

Jesus, the greatest Influencer of all time, said it best after He humbly washed His disciples’ dirty feet: “Do you understand what I was doing? You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and you are right, because it is true. And since I, the Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other’s feet. I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you. How true it is that a servant is not greater than the master. Nor are messengers more important than the one who sends them. You know these things—now go do them! That is the path of blessing” (Jn 13:12-17, *NLT*).

We are not greater than our Master. That is why He gives us the privilege, as stewards of influence, to walk the path of blessing through service.



Bath Salts



The Value of Systematic Giving

When I first visited the central African country of Chad many years ago, church leaders told me I was the first person from the General Conference to ever visit them. They said it made them feel they weren't forgotten.

Back then I didn't know much about the country, but I knew it was poor. Not just uncomfortably poor, but how-are-we-going-to-survive-tomorrow poor. There were more than 7 million people living in Chad (today 13 million)—most of whom had never heard the name of Jesus, or knew little about Him. More than 80 percent of the population were existing below the poverty line and life expectancy was less than 48 years of age.

It's probably a reasonable assumption that, even today, the average Seventh-day Adventist doesn't give much thought to Chad, or the church in Chad. Many would probably have trouble finding it on a world map. And yet I discovered there



was an Adventist mission office in the capital, N'djamena, and throughout the country nearly 1,500 baptized Adventists, 50 Adventist churches and companies, schools, and even a hospital. And a large group of Global Mission Pioneers were 'planting' new groups of believers.

Of course, like the rest of the community, Adventists in Chad are desperately poor. There were only two ordained pastors in the country, and only one had any means of transportation. The secretary-treasurer of the mission didn't even own a bicycle. But the church was alive and functioning. They had programs and projects. They were reaching out to their community.

I got to thinking about the old expression "the squeaky wheel gets the grease." Today in the church some wheels squeak loudly and with great skill. And often the 'big-wheel' organizations that have the most interesting pictures, the most compelling video, the most heart-touching stories, get the big donations—"the grease."

I don't want to downplay the importance of project giving. It does a lot of good, and the church's Global Mission initiative to plant new congregations relies on it. But what do we do about those parts of the world, and those people groups, that can't or don't "squeak?" Those who have no way to share heart-gripping pictures and stories with us?

The church's system of tithes and mission offerings helps ensure that areas such as Chad, which may not seem as "glamorous" or have high visibility, receive help. Every time you give your tithes and mission offerings, you're helping make sure wheels that can't squeak get attention. You're supporting thousands of Global Mission Pioneers. You're helping fund hundreds of missionaries such as Cristy



Gary Krause

*Born in Fiji to Australian missionary parents, Gary Krause directs the Office of Adventist Mission (www.AdventistMission.org). He and his wife, Bettina, are proud parents of eight-year-old Bethany. Gary has written hundreds of published articles and the book, *God's Great Missionaries*. He's currently working on a doctorate looking at wholistic urban ministry.*

Shank, a young doctor working at Malamulo Hospital in Malawi. You're helping to feed and clothe poor people you'll never meet. You're helping to plant new congregations in the world's large cities. You're supporting the gospel going into "all the world." We're thankful for the thousands of specific projects to which Adventists donate. But none of these projects would get too far if it weren't for a much wider and bigger system, which provides the foundation for ongoing support.

Every time you give your tithes and mission offerings, you're helping support schools, hospitals, humanitarian work, media outreach, publishing, church planting and so much more. You're helping the church grow in areas where many church members earn less than a dollar a day.

You're making sure that the wheels that can't squeak still keep turning.



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