

# DYNAMIC Steward

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October-December, 2014

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**Vessels  
of  
Honor**

# 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

## Vessels of Honor



Larry R. Evans  
Associate Director,  
GC Stewardship Ministries

“We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves” (2 Cor. 4:7, *NLT*).

The year was 1905. It was the year of an amazing discovery. The largest uncut diamond ever mined was found in South Africa. The enormous stone weighed in at over 3,100 carats! It was eventually cut into nine large stones and about one hundred smaller ones. The largest, called the “Star of Africa”, is over 530 carats and now resides in the crown jewels collection of the British royalty.

There was great concern about how to safely transport this rare and priceless stone to Britain from South Africa. After much deliberation a diversionary tactic was approved. A large group of security personnel accompanied a decoy shipment to London. However, the actual gem was shipped in a plain brown box by parcel post. Who would suspect such an unassuming package might contain untold wealth!

Sometimes we forget. Sometimes circumstances and those around us help us forget our role as God’s stewards but we must remember. The value of a person isn’t determined by what we see on the outside. It is human nature to measure others and ourselves by what is seen on the outside; but this is wrong.

God, however, sees beyond exteriors. We may see and even feel like “jars of clay” but our Creator sees much more. The “container” is deceptive. It contains no glory. The inestimable value resides inside. Some containers may appear to be cracked, broken and disabled but each one is precious to Him. Each one has enormous potential and often has untapped potential. He sees beyond our brokenness. Our God has placed inside each person a desire for something more—a craving to be part of something bigger and greater than a meaningless day-by-day existence. That’s what a true understanding of stewardship brings.

This issue of the *Dynamic Steward* isn’t a call for pity or sympathy for those whom society often calls “the disabled.” Rather it is meant to be a statement that while some may have what we call disabilities, these are “persons” of inestimable worth who have much to contribute to the mission of God. We must not stand in the way of their calling to contribute by our avoidance, by our neglect, nor by our attitudes that think only in terms of limitations. Those with “special needs” are just that—special persons who do have a real need to be part of something bigger than themselves. They too are vessels of honor. We must not forget that we are all clay jars waiting to be filled to overflowing. All of us are called to be vessels of honor—vessels filled with the grace of Christ not for our own survival but to be part of something much bigger. We must extend that opportunity to all. This too is part of our stewardship.

*Larry R. Evans*  
Editor

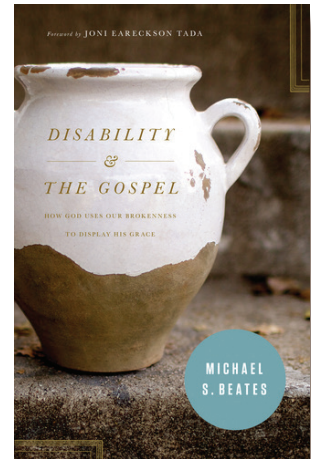
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# resources

Michael Beates's concern with disability issues began nearly 30 years ago when his eldest child was born with multiple profound disabilities. Now, as more families like his are affected by a growing number of difficulties ranging from down syndrome to autism to food allergies, the need for church programs and personal paradigm shifts is greater than ever.

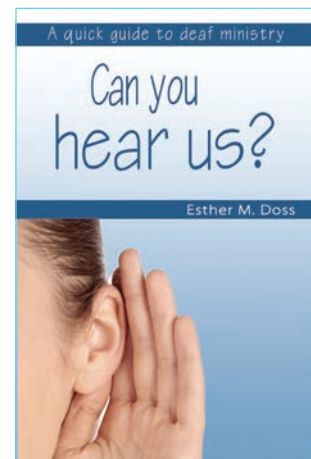
Working through key Bible passages on brokenness and disability while answering hard questions, Michael offers helpful principles for believers and their churches. *In Disability and the Gospel: How God Uses Our Brokenness to Display His Grace*, he shows us how to embrace our own brokenness and then to embrace those who are more physically and visibly broken, bringing hope and vision to those of us who need it most.

***A Disability and the Gospel: How God Uses Our Brokenness to Display His Grace* by Michael Beates: [www.crossway.org](http://www.crossway.org)**



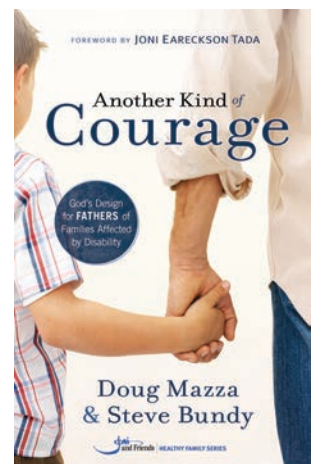
This insightful work, *Can You Hear Us?* comes in the form of a concise 24-page booklet to help one become more acquainted with the Deaf among us, and covers Deaf culture and Deaf ministry. The booklet is not just for those who are learning American Sign Language (ASL) and want to become involved in Deaf ministry. Instead, this is for every hearing member. For, as the booklet emphasizes, everyone has a part to play in Deaf ministry as we are all one large family of God. The booklet includes myths and facts about Deaf people, what video phones are and how to call a Deaf person, how to use an interpreter, suggestions for how to become Deaf-friendly, and more.

***Can You Hear Us?* by Esther M. Doss: [www.3angelsdeafministries.org](http://www.3angelsdeafministries.org).**



For parents, the realization that your child has a disability hits hard. But be encouraged you are not alone! In *Another Kind of Courage*, you will learn about God's design for fathers of families affected by disability. Mothers and wives, you'll get a valuable look inside the heart and mind of your husband, gaining insight about his journey as the father of a child with a disability. All proceeds from the sale of this book are used to help "Joni and Friends" ministry programs.

***Another Kind of Courage*, by Doug Mazza and Steve Bundy: [www.joniandfriends.com](http://www.joniandfriends.com).**



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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.



## Stewardship—Ministering to All People



*Erika F. Puni  
Director,  
GC Stewardship Ministries*

**M**y understanding of stewardship was expanded to a large degree because of the influence of two special people in my life. The first was my grandmother, Gagau Ueese, who had not always been blind, but she was the whole time that I knew her. Apart from this physical challenge, Gagau lived a “normal” life. She contributed fully to family and community activities. Growing up, I learned many lessons about life from her. The second person of special influence was my brother, Enesi Puni. When he lost his sight it changed not only him, but our whole family. These experiences opened a new area of stewardship ministry for me that I had not fully understood nor appreciated before.

### Gagau Ueese—A Minister of Prayer

My most memorable time with my grandmother was during the years when my parents were away on their

second term as Adventist missionaries. For the next four years I lived with my mother’s sister, Fiapai Matau. Often on the weekends, my Aunty Fiapai and I would travel by ferry to see my grandmother. I enjoyed these visits a lot because it provided an opportunity for me to get to know my grandmother better.

What stood out for me during those visits, was the fact that my blind grandmother was the first person in her household to wake up early every morning. From inside her mosquito net in her open family “fale” (Samoan word for house), she would start singing a Christian hymn which was followed by a long prayer. This was her daily routine and by doing so, she was leading out in the family morning devotion. This ritual served as the wake up call and as an invitation for members of her family to join her in prayer time. She was a devoted Christian with a commitment to prayer. This was her ministry and legacy.

### Enesi Puni—A Community Leader

Enesi was a trained pastor and served as an Adventist minister before losing his sight later in life. The ministerial training and his love for study of the Bible was crucial to Enesi’s life after he lost his sight. I remember very well the first time we became aware that Enesi’s vision was gone. It was devastating to all of us but especially to his wife and children. The family’s supportive response, however, was very important to Enesi, for it reminded him that he could still be useful despite the blindness that had brought a major change to his life.

As an extended family, we assisted Enesi and his family relocate to Auckland, New Zealand, where he was able to receive better support and services from government and non-government organizations for his blindness. To ensure that he would continue to have access to study material, we registered Enesi with different entities that provided audio books and other resources for the blind. On his own initiative, Enesi enrolled himself in different courses and educational programs offered in Auckland. He received training in Braille and communicated by email with us on a regular basis. In the last few years prior to his death, Enesi was enjoying a good quality of life with his family, and actively participated in the life of his local church and community. He was a certified Samoan translator working on contract with different hospitals in Auckland, and he was a registered marriage celebrant. The way he lived affirmed that special needs people can minister and are capable of giving back to their communities.

### Stewardship and Ministry to Special Needs Groups

My experience with my grandmother and brother has helped me to think of blind persons as a special people group with particular needs. These are individuals whom Jesus loves, and came into this world “to seek and to save” (Lk. 19: 10). “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord” (Lk. 4:18, 19). These personal experiences of living and growing up with family members who were “blind” has created a new awareness in me about my personal responsibility as a steward to these and other special needs people in the world. Ministering to, and with, special needs persons must be part of Christian stewardship and the wider mission of the Church.

An essential and on-going part of the department's ministry support for the world-field is stewardship education for future leaders and pastors of the Church. In August, 2014, in response to an invitation from the South American Division, Erika Puni accompanied by Pastor Hugo Chinchay, Stewardship and Trust Service Director for the Potomac Conference, NAD, teamed up with Pr. Miguel Pinheiro, SAD Stewardship Director, to present seminars on wholistic stewardship at three Adventist universities in Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia. These were: Universidad Adventista de Bolivia, Universidad Adventista de Chile, and Instituto Tecnológico Superior Adventista del Ecuador. Theology professors and students at these training institutions appreciated the Christ-centered approach and focus of the presentations.

In mid-October, 2014, Wilfredo Sumagaysay, Associate Director of the General Conference Trust Services and Planned Giving department and Erika Puni partnered to present at the stewardship symposium conducted at the Ukrainian Seminary in Buscha, which was hosted by the Stewardship Ministries department of the Euro-Asia Division, under the leadership of Pr. Pavel Liberanskiy, ESD Stewardship Director.

Later in October Puni and Dr. Larry Evans, Associate Director for GC Stewardship Ministries, joined forces with Pastor Happy Sibilang, SSD Stewardship Ministries Director, as key presenters at the Stewardship International Conference sponsored by the Faculties of Religion and Business Studies at the Asia-Pacific International University in Muak Lek, Thailand. In the words of Dr. Miguel Luna, Dean of the Faculty of Religious Studies, "These were not only important lessons on stewardship education but also a spiritual renewal for those attended the sessions."



**GC Stewardship Ministries gives essential support in the world-field for education in wholistic stewardship by visiting faculty and students on five Adventist university campuses in three of the world divisions during 2014.**



# interview

## Called to Serve!



Joan Bova interviewed by Larry R. Evans, Editor of Dynamic Steward

Joan Bova is the former Disabilities Ministries Coordinator for the Southern Union Conference, as well as for the North American Division. Joan has had a physical disability since childhood. She resides in North Carolina, USA, with her husband, Phil, and is currently retired.

Photos by Ron Quick.

**LRE:** How would you describe your disability?

**JB:** I have not always had a disability. When I was twelve I began noticing pain in my wrists and that I had a low-grade fever. I was always very active so the pain seemed strange. I went to the doctor and his diagnosis was that I had juvenile rheumatoid arthritis. It has progressively gotten worse over the past 53 years.

**LRE:** Is the word “disability” offensive to you?

**JB:** Not at all! I prefer it over “handicapped.” I often refer to myself as a person with a disability. Notice I use the word “person” first to make the point that first of all I’m a person. What kind of person? I am a person who happens to have a disability.

**LRE:** Many today refer to individuals like you as a disabled person.

**JB:** That’s right and sometimes just a disability. In other words, someone might call me “an arthritis.” I’m not “an arthritis.” I’m a person who has arthritis. See the difference?

**LRE:** Yes, however, some are offended if they are called disabled.

**JB:** Let me explain that, if I may. Think about the word “disability.” The reason that it’s OK is that dis-ability means there’s something wrong with the ability. It does not mean that you have no ability. It means there’s an impairment of some kind to one or more of your abilities. For me to say I’m not disabled is silly. I do not walk and walking is an ability. In that context I have a “dis-ability” when it comes to walking and running. However, I still have a lot of ability. I’m not useless. I have many abilities, but I just don’t walk. See the difference? For me the word “handicapped” is different. It’s a whole different ballgame. For example. If I come to your church and there are a lot of steps to get into the door, and there’s no ramp, then I have just been handicapped by my environment. So I have become a handicapped person because I use a wheelchair and I can’t get in there. I’m not as a person handicapped; the situation has handicapped me.

**LRE:** Do you find a challenge in the church? What can we do better?

**JB:** Oh, all the time. First of all, the church needs to design and build with all people in mind. For example, if I come to your church, have you planned on me using a wheelchair? Will I be able to use your bathroom? Would I be able to come onto the platform if you were to invite me to have opening prayer during the worship service?

We also need to teach the church to think inclusively. The church isn’t always educated to do that. The church that is educated looks at everyone’s talents—including mine. In other words, as a person with a disability, God has given me abilities too. Right?



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# interview

So if the church is doing this, it will look at me and say, “What are Joan Bova’s abilities? How can she use those talents and abilities to further the cause of the God?” If we are going to be a church that speaks to all people, we’ve got to be inclusive of all people. Keep in mind that disability means everything—any kind of mental or physical impairment of any kind.

**LRE: What actions by others have been most helpful to you?**

**JB:** First of all, it is helpful when individuals are open to learning more. When a person understands disabilities, they look at it in the broad view and are open to learning even more. They allow those with disabilities to teach them. The quality that is the most needed is honesty. Don’t be afraid to talk about my disability—I already know about it.

**LRE: Attitudes are important then?**

**JB:** Yes, and attitude goes both ways. The non-disabled and the disabled person both have an attitude. A disabled person may come to church with a bad attitude and say, “Why didn’t you plan for me?” On the other hand, someone with a good attitude might say, “They must not have planned for me because they don’t know; therefore, I have the responsibility to educate them.”

**LRE: It has been said, “God’s power always shows up best in brokenness.” Do you feel you are a better person because of your juvenile rheumatoid arthritis?**

It’s true. I’m a much better person. My body is broken. My body was not meant to have arthritis but because it does, I have the opportunity to learn and share more. Think about it. I am able now to empathize with others because I hurt. If I cannot walk, which I can’t, and you for some reason had an accident, I am able to understand your pain better. I’m able now to serve others, help them more by being more understanding. I believe, I really believe, that I have an advantage of leading you to Jesus if I can first understand your challenges. I’m called to serve disabled people. I’ve always known that. And how could I have served them if I wasn’t one of them? My disability is most definitely a blessing.

**LRE: What counsel would you give those struggling with their own disability?**

**JB:** I would say to them first of all, give it time. Time changes everything. Give yourself the opportunity to grieve. Everyone has to go through the grieving process, and that takes time. There is no time limit on that. Anyone who sustains a great loss, like losing an ability, is going to grieve. You have to give that some time. I would tell that person that with time you will learn to do things differently. At first it’s like, “Oh no! What’s happened to me?” But later on it’s like, “No big deal.” Eventually the disability becomes your new norm.

**LRE: What suggestions do you have for a local church or pastor?**

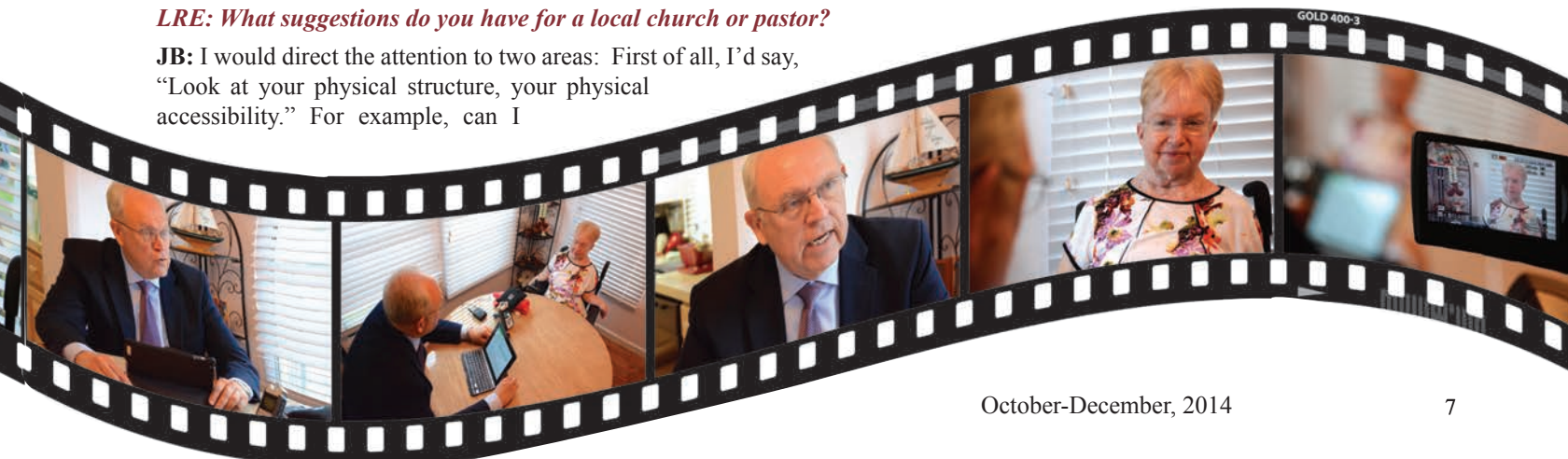
**JB:** I would direct the attention to two areas: First of all, I’d say, “Look at your physical structure, your physical accessibility.” For example, can I

get in your door with a wheelchair? If I’m blind, can I figure out how to get around? If I’m deaf, is there a sign language interpreter? A ramp might be needed for accessibility. Look first at your physical structure. Then after that, look at the attitudinal barriers.

**LRE: What does disability ministries have to do with stewardship?**

**JB:** Stewardship means responsibility, right? We’re all called to be stewards of what we have. That means I must be a good steward of you and you of me. I just happen to be one of those disabled people but that does not excuse my responsibility. The Lord expects the same of me as He does of you. There can be no “Oh, poor me” excuses. No, I must learn how to do things in spite of my limitations. At the same time we must remember that in God’s eyes I’m not limited. In God’s eyes, He’s given me gifts and abilities too. So God says to me, “Use what I’ve given you and share it with others.” That’s what it’s all about.

When anyone takes on the name of Christ, they become God’s people. It’s that simple. It doesn’t matter whether they walk or talk or hear or see; that’s irrelevant. The point is: Those who have accepted Jesus Christ, who take on the name of Christian, are to live by His principles. As Seventh-day Adventist Christians, we believe we are to share the gospel with everyone. Isn’t that exciting!





## Challenged by the Challenged



*Laurie Evans and son, Duane Evans*

*Laurie Evans is a retired pastor (Australia) and previous president of the South Pacific Division. He and his family worked in Australia and overseas, in Fiji and Papua New Guinea, as missionaries. He has filled various positions from Accountant, Union Mission Secretary, Conference Treasurer and President, Secretary of the SPD and for the last ten years of his career, as President of the SPD retiring at the end of 2007.*

Jesus' purpose for coming to this earth was more than to endure the death penalty that sin had heaped on the human race. It included "bringing good news to the afflicted" (Isa. 61:1); breaking "every yoke" (Isa. 58:6), with a call "not to hide yourself from your own flesh" (Isa. 58:7). His ministry was all about caring for the marginalised of society—letting the oppressed go free; dividing your bread with the hungry; caring for the homeless poor (Isa. 58: 6, 7); looking after the orphans and widows in their distress (Js. 1: 27). The sensitive and compassionate way in which He interacted with the deaf, and vision impaired and persons with all manner of disabilities, is surely a challenge to the church and all Christians to reflect this same attitude.

One of the greatest misconceptions that can exist in the mind of a person is that disabilities of whatever kind are an indication of God's judgment on that person or the family. This is a myth that goes back to the earliest of times when Job's comforters sought to lay this guilt load onto him as if it were the cause for his terrible afflictions. In spite of his excruciating pain, and the fact that he could see no light at the end of a long, dark tunnel, he was able to affirm his integrity (Job 31) and proclaim in a voice that echoes on down through the centuries, "Though He slay me, yet will I hope in Him" (Job 13:15, NIV). Jesus, millennia later, affirmed the same truth when the disciples asked him about a man who could not see from birth: "Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?" (Jn. 9:2). His response was as clear as it was unequivocal. "It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him" (Jn. 9:3).

The reality is that sin affected and infected all of God's creation. The ground was cursed, the laws of nature took on a whole new dimension as illustrated at the time of the flood, and mankind was inflicted with mortality, which included a corruption of the natural laws for genetics and reproduction. It is a truism that just as the sun rises "on the evil and the good" and the rain falls "on the righteous and the unrighteous" (Matt. 5:45). So, while we continue to live on this planet, tragedies and misfortune are the lot of both the children of God and the children of this world. However, for the former group, there is the re-assuring promise by One whose word can be trusted: "In all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

The way we refer to people or groups of people within our society is usually done with the best of intentions, but it nevertheless often tends to influence the way we come to regard them. Labels like academics, innovators, leaders, self-starters, etc., conjure up a certain positive image in our minds of those kinds of people, while such terms as homeless, disadvantaged, illiterate and the like, tend to create a negative picture. "Disabled" is one such descriptor that can be a little demeaning, and it carries the connotation of being in some ways a "lesser person." A more affirming term would be "persons with disabilities." This first and foremost recognizes such people as "persons." They do not want special treatment; they want to be valued for who they are and treated as normal people who need to feel that they are in charge of their life and allowed to exercise their God given power of choice as much as circumstances allow.

Much of Jesus' teachings centered on the contribution people can make with their particular giftedness; visiting the sick, caring for those in prison, looking after the poor or giving a cup of cold water to the thirsty. People with disabilities are well placed to contribute to this kind of ministry, a ministry that Jesus highlighted as being a defining characteristic of His disciples (Matt. 25: 34–40). **There is so much we can learn from these people.** Most do not bare grudges, do not discriminate, and do not know the meaning of prejudice or racial discrimination. They have a great capacity, in a world of artificiality, to love without pretence and reveal the quality of love that Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 13: 4-6, that of being "patient, kind, not given to jealousy, bragging, displaying no arrogance, not acting unbecomingly, who keep no records of wrongs." These people possess the 'genuine product,' not some counterfeit home brand!

According to Scripture, stewardship involves the proper deployment of our



talents, which includes much more than material assets. It includes our influence: “Not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself” (Rom. 14:7). It includes the time that we have been given: “We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work” (Jn. 9:4). It also includes the care we show others: “You shall love your neighbour as yourself” (Lev. 19:18). These, clearly, are part of the inventory that we all possess and it is incumbent on us to use these talents in a ministry to bless others. These “others” include persons with disabilities who are often the neglected of society, the overlooked and ignored who can contribute so much and yet in many cases receive so little. Our ministry to these precious people must begin by:

- Recognizing each as a person with needs similar to ours and whom God loves and made in His image;
- Treating them as equals and valuing the contribution that they can make in their own right;
- Not talking down to them but letting them think and act for themselves within the capacity that they possess.
- Affording them the opportunity to develop and grow within their respective capabilities and recognizing that each person is an individual.
- Including them in our social activities and making sure we include them in our conversations and interactions with others.
- Offering to provide hands on care, where the need exists, to give relief

to the family responsible for their welfare.

As a family who has been greatly enriched by having a son, Duane, with a disability I can testify to the joy and immeasurable pleasure and blessing that such persons bring with them into this world. We count it a privilege to be selected by heaven to care for one of His special people for whom He showed so much compassion, sensitivity and care. Duane’s radiant personality, generous spirit, spontaneous acceptance of all he comes into contact with and his loving heart has made us millionaires! If you want to add a dimension to your stewardship responsibilities that will return a blessing on you a hundredfold, take time and make the effort to reach out to persons with disabilities, and your life will never be the same again.



# perspective

## Lift Him Up!



**Larry Pitcher**

*Larry Pitcher is the president of Christian Record Services for the Blind. He is passionate about helping people who live with visual impairments see Jesus through Christian Record's free services ministry. In his spare time, Larry enjoys reading, woodworking, camping, traveling, and leading Sabbath School at his local church. Larry and his wife Leilani make their home in Lincoln, Nebraska, USA.*



Christian Record Services for the Blind, since 1899: [www.crsbday.org](http://www.crsbday.org)

I received a special phone call today from John as I was working at my desk at Christian Record Services for the Blind. I met John at one of the National Camps for the Blind in late July. Since that time, he has called me periodically with a quick greeting, a Bible verse, and a blessing.

During today's call he shared Psalm 146:8:

The Lord gives sight to the blind,  
The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down,

The Lord loves the righteous.

"Thank you, John!" I said. "I'll

write it down. Thank you for calling and for sharing this with me."

"You're welcome," John said. "You know, I call and share these verses with you because God had raised up Christian Record for people who are bowed down to help them see Jesus."

I was humbled by John's comments. After finishing the call, I sat back for a moment, deep in thought. John reminded me of something very important.

Here it is, in the words of Jesus, as written in Matthew 28:19:

"... Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit ..."

The word that leaps out at me in this verse is "all." We are called by Jesus to make disciples of all nations, all peoples. That includes people who live with blindness.

What does that mean for me? I take this commission from Jesus wherever I go, whether it be to the grocery store, the city park, my local church—wherever in the world Jesus sends me. **It means making and building friendships that grow into opportunities for discipleship. And sometimes I'm the one who needs to be disciplined!**

What does that mean for you? When you see a person who lives with a disability, be it blindness or another handicap, do you say "Hello"? Truly, many great friendships have started by greeting the person and treating him or her with respect.

Christian Record Services for the Blind (CRSB) is the Seventh-day Adventist Church's official ministry for people who are blind or visually impaired. CRSB stands by your side, ready to support your new friend with free services and programs in braille, audio, and large print. A free Bible from Christian Record would enable your friend to study the Bible with you. *The Student*, the braille version of the *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, helps your friend study and be able to participate during Sabbath School discussion time. These items and many more are available because of faithful stewards to Christian Record's ministry to help the blind "see" Jesus.

Thinking back to John and his encouraging phone calls, I encourage you with this: One day, Jesus will return in the clouds. "Every eye shall see Him" (Revelation 1:7). Every eye! Even the eyes of those who have lived with blindness. Imagine that day—the first thing our friends who are blind will see is the face of Jesus. What a wonderful day that will be.

We are a royal priesthood, as described in 1 Peter 2:9, and it is because of God's abundant and amazing grace that we are called the children of God. Because of our higher calling, we are to look with kind regard upon those who are blind or visually impaired. **If we are truly serious about going into all the world, we cannot be among those who marginalize, discriminate, ignore, abuse, or belittle anyone.** We do not know when an action or a word will influence an individual's decision for or against Jesus. I want to be counted among those who were compassionate in thought and in deed, as well as generous in giving my time, talents and resources to enable God to work in the lives of all He grants me the opportunity to meet.

People like John love Jesus, and yet there are many more who either don't know Him or need to become reacquainted. This can happen through you.

**What can you do today to lift up those who are "bowed down"?**



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# in practice

## Spotlight on Kenya

It was 1903, and Kenya was a mission field yet un-entered by the Adventist Church. That is, until two pastors and their families came from the United States and Malawi, respectively, and settled alongside Lake Victoria. The local community graciously received them and supported the establishment of the mission station in generous and creative ways. One community elder donated land, and another man with a motorboat helped by transporting building materials over from the town on the other side of the lake. The wife of one of the pastors, in anticipation of her husband's return, would regularly go out as night fell, and light a safari lamp (lantern) and put it up on a tall post outside the building, to guide the boat safely to the pier (See [http://www.eau.adventist.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=94&Itemid=27](http://www.eau.adventist.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=94&Itemid=27), 2 Dec., 2014).

With the Lord's blessing, and a contagious vision by those early leaders, Kenya, now part of the East Central Africa Division, represents one of the fastest growing areas in the world Adventist church. Nevertheless, un-entered people-groups still exist the world over, and also in Kenya. There are still people who have not yet heard the good news of Jesus Christ. The Deaf community of Kenya represents one such mission field. It is, however, good to report that God's people in Kenya, are still "lighting the lamp" as that missionary-wife did long ago, to enthusiastically guide people home!

Pastor Muasya, Special Needs Ministries Director, East Kenya Union Conference, says that "Special Needs Ministry is surely a ministry whose time has come. Judging from what is currently taking place in Kenya, nothing will any longer prevent people with special needs from receiving the gospel."

He asks an important question: "What does the term 'special needs' mean?" *Special Needs Ministries*, a resource useful for this kind of outreach published by the General Conference Sabbath School and Personal Ministries department, tells us on pages 11, 12, that, "A special need is a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities which includes breathing, communicating, hearing, learning, manual tasks, seeing, walking or working."

Pastor Muasya shares further that Special Needs Ministries, and in particular, Ministry to the Deaf in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Kenya, started in April, 2007 at Ziwani Church in Mombasa. It has now spread to over 44 churches, companies and schools, in all the conferences within the local Union.

"We are now serving close to one thousand Deaf and 464 of them are already baptized," he says. "One hundred and three have graduated from the "Discover" program of the Voice Of Prophecy Bible Correspondence School, and 122 are still busy with the lessons."

"Other news since that report is that from August 24 to 30, 2014, our first camp meeting for the Deaf in the history of the church in Kenya was held at Karura Seventh-day Adventist School in Nairobi. Two hundred and twenty-six Deaf members attended the event. At the end of the camp meeting a baptism was held for 43 Deaf candidates as well as a graduation ceremony for 99 Voice of Prophecy Discover Bible School students. Free, easy-to-read Bibles, donated by the Bible League International, were to be given out to every Deaf person who attended."

"The first four classrooms have also been completed at the local Adventist primary school for the Deaf, a first in the country, with an enrollment of 18 Deaf children. We have even hosted two Deaf weddings!"

We praise the Lord for the momentum that this important ministry has gained, and the faithful workers who are reaching out. We solicit prayers for its continued growth in Kenya, and in the world-field.



**M.P. Muasya interviewed by P. Brink, Assistant Editor of Dynamic Steward**

*Pr. M.P. Muasya, M.A. Pastoral Ministries, has previously served as a teacher, chaplain, high school principal, Central Kenya Conference Department Director, Executive Secretary and President for the Kenya Union for 13 years (2001-2013). He is now serving as the VOP/ Special Needs Ministries Director for the East Kenya Union Conference. He is married to Betty and they have three children.*



**Attendees at the first Adventist Deaf Campmeeting in Kenya.**



**Wata Adventist School for the Deaf pupils in their new classroom.**

# commitment

## Who's Really Missing Out?



**Esther Doss**

*Esther Doss is a "Child of Deaf Adults" (CODA). She writes from her unique perspective of living between both the Deaf and hearing worlds and her eye-witness accounts of the Deaf experience. She lives in the Ozark Mountains of Arkansas with her husband and young son and works for Three Angels Deaf Ministries.*

Among the many gifts God has given us, my favorite is the special gift of friendship. We are made to be social creatures and our desire for a meaningful relationship with others is a natural need. However, some of us do not experience ready smiles or gestures of friendship.

"I'm not going to church today," my mom declared one Sabbath morning. She didn't look ill, so I prodded for a reason. My Deaf mother signed back to me, "What's the point? I go in, sit in silence and walk out. Even at the fellowship meal no one talks to me. I try to approach them, but they are always in a rush. No one takes an interest in me." I reminded her that members greet her by signing Happy Sabbath. "That's all they do from week to week, 'Happy Sabbath! Happy Sabbath!' They pat themselves on the back for a job well done and then they turn to chat with everyone else. I would love to have a meaningful conversation with someone once in a while. And I hate going to church socials. I get so lonesome while watching everyone else talk and laugh. I'm tired of turning to food to keep myself company."

In fact, this frustration is an all too common one among Deaf people. Most Deaf people are born to an all-hearing family; too many times they are taken for granted and not truly included even in family life. While longing for the needed affection and attention from their parents, siblings, and other relatives, they feel ostracized and purposefully excluded, resulting in deep emotional wounds. Instead of perpetuating the agony, our church family should provide these wounded souls a sense of belonging.

Soon after my mom's declaration, I visited a nearby church and noticed Maria, a lovely youth who was bound to her wheelchair. Her smile was so contagious that I was drawn to her side. After a few minutes of chatting, I found that Maria was really fun-loving and intelligent. I asked Maria if she ever felt frustrated about not



**"I discovered that I have been missing out on the blessings of time spent with some of God's most special children."**



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# commitment

being able to walk. After taking a breath, she shared, “I am okay with being in this wheelchair. What bothers me is that people don’t want to talk with me. Sometimes it’s like they don’t see me. I’m alright with not being able to run and play with other kids. I really like watching them play. I just wish people would look down and see me. I get really lonely.”

There are many Maria’s among us, each one unique and struggling with any one or more of a variety of disabilities. They are just like anyone else and crave for friendship.

We are such funny creatures. Our hearts long for relationships, but should we catch a glimpse of anyone somehow different, we do not know how to conduct ourselves. And so what do we do? Our tendency is to find the nearest exit away from the awkward situation.

Should a double amputee in a wheelchair happen upon our path, we fear the guilt of staring impolitely, so we avoid eye contact by looking in the opposite direction. If a Deaf man comes to church, we leave him to himself because most of us have no clue about communicating in sign language. Besides, what does one say to a Deaf person? We might find ourselves face to face with someone suffering from paralysis due to a neck injury; we cut off the conversation as soon as possible lest we say something offensive. In fact, our mode of operation is to avoid an encounter altogether. It’s much safer this way.

A Deaf man once pointed me to something that Ellen White wrote: “I saw that it is in the providence of God that widows and orphans, the blind, the deaf, the lame, and persons afflicted in a variety of ways, have been placed in close Christian relationship to His church; it is to prove His people and develop their true character. Angels of God are watching to see how we treat these persons who need our sympathy, love, and disinterested benevolence. This is God’s test of our character.” 3T p.511.

This simple paragraph has been a tough challenge for me. The thought of such individuals being placed in my path as a test of my character has troubled me for I have failed again and again. I have caught myself pretending to not see someone or that I am busy and need to break away. But I am stopping myself now and reaching out. And you know what I have found? I discovered that I have been missing out on the blessings of time spent with some of God’s most special children.

We talk often about unity within the church, yet we are resistant to talk with some of its members just because of a disability or an inability. We talk about love and being loving, but we find that we prefer to show love to those we deem lovable or with whom we feel most comfortable. We also frequently use the cliché, “What would Jesus do?”

And what did Jesus do when he walked down the city streets of Jericho, Capernaum, or Jerusalem? The Gospels tell us that Jesus’s heart was tender toward those who suffered from a variety of conditions. One such account tells us that an untouchable, loathsome leper knelt down before Jesus and asked for healing. “And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand and touched him” (Mark 1:41, KJV). And of course, the leper was healed. In fact, the majority of Jesus’ miracles were with people with disabilities.

As Jesus met one disabled person after another, He did not see them as strange or worthless. Nor were those encounters awkward. Their very presence was not offensive to Him. Rather, Jesus saw them as His Father’s children who were suffering in body, mind, and spirit. He had great compassion for them and reached out to them. He loved them.

**How about committing to learning a new language? Take a sign-language class and experience the Lord's direction as you use this new skill to reach others for Him!**



Indeed, Jesus is our Perfect Model. He has given us an example of how to treat the disabled around us. Jesus touched them. He had compassion on them. He loved them and was a friend to them. In several places in the Gospels, we see Jesus was more concerned about their spiritual health. He knew that a person’s spiritual condition was far more important than their physical condition. They needed forgiveness and a saving relationship with their Creator and Savior. We are now Christ’s hands and feet in this world; we are to take the same attitude He did to those around us, including to the disabled.

My challenge to us all is simply this: pray that we will be more loving, put aside those awkward feelings, and share some moments of life with someone we might not have otherwise. When we look into those eyes we’ll see a real person, a child of God. God has indeed given us the wonderful gift of friendship. Let us not miss out on precious relationships just because of a fear of awkwardness. Let us rather be wise in how we extend Jesus’ hand of friendship, through our smiles, love, and affection.

# young adult

Random thought...  
...Who is my family?

## Unstoppable!



**Isaac Houston**

*Isaac is a senior at Union College. He was born in Calcutta, India and moved to the United States when he was a year old. In his free time he enjoys being outdoors cycling and adventuring.*

The clock finally clicked down to double zero and the game was over. My dad's basketball team had just won the final game of a long-weekend tournament in Seattle. He came over to the sidelines and took me out on the court with him and his other teammates to celebrate and take pictures.

I was used to this scenario. Not to brag, but dad is definitely a champion. In my mind's eye, he's unstoppable. Whether on the court on weekends or on the many church boards he was a part of, he always made a full effort and taught me the power of a good name. He also taught me the importance of a well-knit family.

Everywhere I went people knew my dad and spoke highly of him and were proud to be his friend.

What I haven't told you is that my dad is disabled. Dad is in a wheelchair. A bullet shot in the middle of a fire fight in Vietnam bruised his spinal cord. He has been in a wheelchair since 1969.

Dad made every effort to be involved in his community and didn't let a physical disability hinder that. This desire to be a part of the community helped my siblings and me to never gain a negative view of disability. We learned by example.

My constant exposure to hospitals and Dad's wheelchair basketball league taught me a lot about people with disabilities. Each has a unique story. They each have unique struggles, but what I found from those who were successful was that a great attitude and a great support network made all the difference.

My parents went out of their way to support each other in their endeavors.

I've learned that the family is the go-to, the biggest part of the network. They're there to do what needs to be done in both the good and bad times.

The church also forms part of this support network, without which success and optimism cannot be reached. We should support all who have special needs and give them opportunities. Also, we need to support the family that is supporting the person. It's a two-faceted thing: the individual and the family need different types of support, but both are vital.

Sometimes we didn't always feel welcome when visiting other churches, but in reality those members might merely not have known how to act around him.

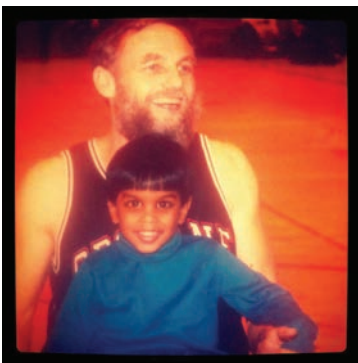
In keeping with the attitude of the "unstoppable," he usually brushed that off. I've never seen something bother him too much. He has always been comfortable with his abilities and the fact that he belongs to a church that gives him the support and the opportunity to be successful.

Mom received weird looks ever so often, and people questioning why she married my father, but I'm not aware of any outright discrimination aimed at her. She treats Dad like he was a normal person. Growing up, dad's wheelchair never factored in. She made sure we knew and respected him as the head of the family.

He's my dad—first and last. From support to advice, he goes out of his way to give me the best opportunities available.

We all face disability in many forms every day: poverty, illiteracy, mental and physical disabilities. Church members don't always know how to act around people with these challenges. Jesus' ministry provides the greatest example of how to act around them and why our church should care about them. He always reached out to those with the many disabilities and looked past their disabilities and into their character, drawing them to Him, and in turn, putting them on a path to success.

## My hero...



## My family...





## Personal Capital

A financial consultant firm with which I work has developed a concept of life-time capital. Simply put, the idea is that early in life we have a life-time of vigor ‘wealth,’ but we are very short on other more tangible assets. The graph nearby shows the hypothetical trends of Personal Capital, including Human Capital (the ability to earn), Housing Equity, Pension Value and Financial Assets.

A young person may think that she has no wealth, while in reality she has a career of potential earnings, or human capital. A middle-aged person has begun to accrue some more tangible assets, but the career earnings potential has been partly used up. A retiree has used up virtually all of his human capital, but has (hopefully) accrued enough financial capital to carry him through the retirement years.

For investment theorists, it is an interesting concept which can guide how investments are allocated during the lifelong shift of personal capital. However the Christian looks at his life differently. *Is it possible to graph the more spiritual aspects of one’s life? How does my spiritual passion capital trend? Does it mature and grow from my youthful ‘first love’? How about my character capital? Do my ‘fruits of the spirit’ grow and develop over my life of service? Perhaps my stewardship capital declines through a life of a covenant relationship with God, as I ‘use up’ my potential giving, but how do I measure the untold heavenly wealth accrued through a walk with Jesus?*

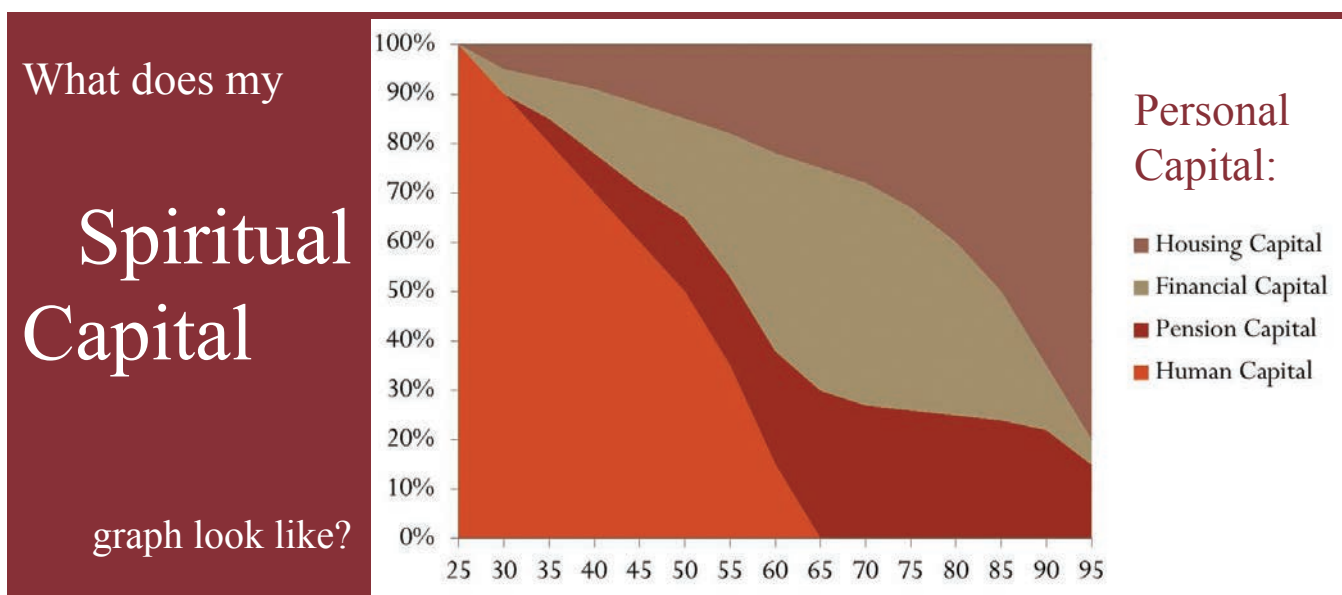
No, even though it makes one think, I guess I won’t try to graph the concept of spiritual capital. It just doesn’t fit. The graph nearby assumes a termination of life, but the Christian is accruing for eternity; probably not enough room on the page for that graph. Furthermore, the eternal wealth of heaven does not accrue over a life of hard work, but is the result of the blood of Jesus, a value which cannot be quantified. “With more than a father’s pitying love for the son of his care, God had ‘sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling-place.’ [2 Chr. 36:15, 16.] When remonstrance, entreaty, and rebuke had failed, he sent to them the best gift of Heaven; nay, he poured out all Heaven in that one gift” (*The Great Controversy*, p. 19).



**Del Johnson**

*Del Johnson served as a missionary in Asia for 17 years in denominational treasury, administrative and management positions. Returning to North America, he served as a conference treasurer and since 1996, in the NAD retirement office. In 1999 he was appointed as Administrator of the retirement plans of the NAD.*

*Johnson graduated from Southern Missionary College with degrees in Business Administration and Theology in 1976. He obtained an MHA from Loma Linda University in 1987. He is married to Andrea Johnson who is a registered nurse. They have two sons.*



## *Quotes on Special Needs Ministry*

“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute” (Proverbs 31:8).

“I saw that it is in the providence of God that widows and orphans, the blind, the deaf, the lame, and persons afflicted in a variety of ways, have been placed in close Christian relationship to His church; it is to prove His people and develop their true character. Angels of God are watching to see how we treat these persons who need our sympathy, love, and disinterested benevolence. This is God's test of our character (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, Vol. 3, p. 511).

“Heaven and Hell can end up participating in the same event but for different reasons.”

“God permits what He hates in order to accomplish what He loves.” (Joni E Tada)

