

DYNAMIC Steward

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January-March, 2015

The Steward-Leader

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Following
God's
Lead

DYNAMIC Steward



My all in response to God's all!

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inside ds

Being the Best “for” the World



Larry R. Evans
Associate Director,
GC Stewardship Ministries

Leadership Prayers, Richard Kriegbaum reflects this insight in a leader's prayer:

“This is my one incessant prayer to you, hour by hour, day upon day: It's yours. I am not fighting this battle for you, God. It's your battle, and you are fighting for me. It is all yours, and I want whatever you have for me in this situation. . . . It is not my organization it is yours, so I depend on your Spirit to show me what to do. These are not my people. I chose them and organized their efforts, but they do not belong to me. You entrusted them to my leadership, and they agreed to follow me. They deserve more and sometimes expect more of me than I can give them. . . . So much depends on me, yet all I have for this task is whatever health and energy you give me—my eyes, ears, back, heart, lungs, knees, hands, feet, voice” (p. 6).

Such are the reflections of a steward-leader. Understanding one's own stewardship can be the very avenue God will use to bless and empower others to develop their own abilities. A steward-leader's mission is never confined to his own interests.

Have you ever stopped at an airport bookstore and looked at the books in the business section? It doesn't take long before it becomes clear that what's inside is often an emphasis on “self-focus.” A theme that runs through these make-shift libraries seems to be clear: How to find wealth, success and significance. To substantiate such an emphasis, noted individuals of success are profiled. Yet the One who changed the world modeled a different kind of leadership. Those who wrote about Him in Scripture concluded: As a successful leader He was humble. He was not self-focused. He lived for the good of others (Phil. 2:5-11). Dewitt Jones, a renowned photographer-philosopher, said it well. It's not about being the best in the world but rather “being your best *for* the world.” Such is the hallmark of a true steward-leader.

This issue of the *Dynamic Steward* is about the steward-leader as he or she hears the call from Christ to serve. The shepherd's rod featured on the cover of this issue is a reflection not only of a leader's authority but also the care used to defend and guide the sheep. As you read you will explore different facets of being a steward-leader. The challenge is great but no bigger than the One who has called us. In Him we become the best we can be *for* the world.

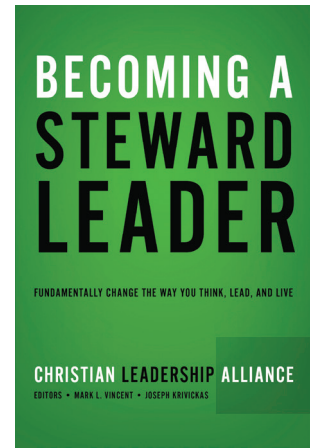
Larry R. Evans
Editor

resources

Money, stewardship, leadership: How do they fit together? This work explores what it means to go beyond prevailing paradigms on money and possessions to embrace a biblical view of stewardship. This book will fundamentally change the way you think, lead, and live.

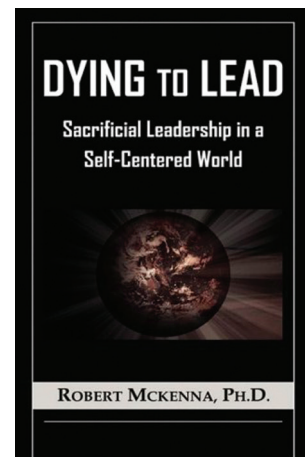
The experienced thought-leaders who contributed to *Becoming A Steward Leader* reflect on their life's work in stewardship thinking and application. They share insights, counsel, concerns, and aspirations for the emerging generation of Christian leaders. You will discover the biblical understanding of a steward; apply insights to become a steward-leader; overcome the god-like power of money; embrace giving as an essential Christian discipline; and more. This book advocates resource development as transformative ministry in the life of the giver. You will want to examine your heart motives and encourage others in their journey to become biblical steward-leaders.

Becoming A Steward Leader, Edited by Mark L. Vincent & Joseph Krivickas. Available at www.christianleadershipalliancestore.org



Whether you are a manager, a president, or a parent, this book will help you reframe your thinking about leadership and what it means to be responsible for the growth, direction, and work of others. Dr. Rob McKenna highlights the realities of leading others, and offers meaningful questions and advice for becoming the leader you would like to be, as well as the kind of leader you would follow. *Dying to Lead: Sacrificial Leadership in a Self-Centered World* is approachable and practical, with short chapters and reflection questions. It is humorous at times, full of practical advice, and loaded with important questions that will get you thinking more deeply about your journey as a leader and as a person.

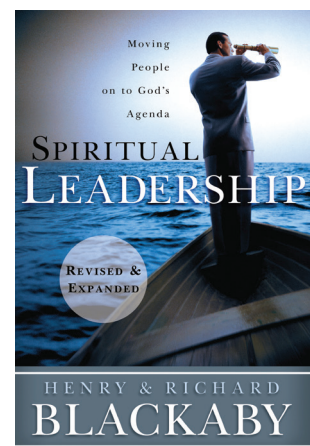
Dying to Lead: Sacrificial Leadership in a Self-Centered World, by Robert McKenna. Available at www.realtimedevlopmentstrategies.com



Spiritual Leadership is one of Henry and Richard Blackaby's most highly regarded and best-selling books to date, encouraging business and church leaders alike to follow God's biblical design for success. In fact, the Barna Group reports that pastors list it among today's most influential writings on the topic of how God develops, guides, and empowers spiritual leaders.

In this new trade paper edition of *Spiritual Leadership*, the Blackabys update their notes on the key points regarding a leader's challenges, character qualities, influence, decision making techniques, and more, all the while focusing on how leaders discover and promote God's vision for their organization and move people on to His agenda. There are also new chapters on leading change and leading teams.

Spiritual Leadership, Moving People on to God's Agenda, by Henry & Richard Blackaby. Available at www.bhpublishinggroup.com/products/spiritual-leadership-2/



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concept

Steward-Leaders



Erika F. Puni
*Director,
GC Stewardship Ministries*

As a pastor I cannot lead from a distance. I've got to be present with the people." Pastor Andre Ascalon of the First Seventh-day Adventist Church of Newark, New Jersey (USA) shared this statement with me. It made a real impression. As a pastor he ministers to two congregations yet he lives two hours away from his churches. Despite the distance, he is always present with his congregations at least twice a week including prayer meetings. He rarely accepts invitations to preach and teach outside of his churches because he wants to be close and available to his members.

The Newark church has shown impressive growth in both its membership and financial resources. As a result of challenging his members to make their place of worship representative of their God, church facilities have been improved and upgraded. Pastor Ascalon is also committed to helping members extend their ministry to the local community. While there may be many varying factors that contribute to the growth and vibrancy of life in this church, I'm convinced that the steward-ship

of the pastor plays a significant role in the growth experience of this congregation.

The Steward-Leader

The Apostle Peter indicated that when Christian leaders administer and exercise their responsibilities, they are doing so on behalf of God Himself, the "Chief Shepherd" (1 Pet. 5:4). The idea of representing God through the gift of leadership is highlighted further in Peter's reference to the biblical concept of "calling" (1 Pet. 5:10). Leaders are in the business of influencing people to live according to God's purpose, which means they are being called to be His agents of positive change in the world. The leader's call to guide God's people is a privilege and an honor but never a right. I saw this demonstrated in the Christian leadership of Pastor Ascalon's ministry.

The Shepherd Motif

In Scripture, steward-ship finds expression in the imagery of the shepherd and the principles of "shepherding." In fact, Peter seems to understand these two ministry concepts of "stewardship" and "shepherding" as one and the same reality (1 Pet. 5:4). For Peter, Christian leaders (pastors and elders) are shepherds who, on behalf of God, lead "His flock," the church. Shepherds lead from the front. They are "willing" leaders, and they take the initiative to lead and provide direction. They know God has called them to their assigned leadership role. They are assertive, they demonstrate a total commitment to the task, and lead by example (1Pet. 5:2-4). This is steward-ship.

The Leadership Reality

Leadership is not without its challenges, and Peter understood from his own experience. As a result, he reminded elders of the importance of humility in Christian service (1 Pet. 5:5). Humility has to be a 'constant' in steward-ship.

Peter also reminds Christian leaders of Satan's desire to destroy them and those they are leading. But there is good news. In the midst of these tests and sufferings, Peter reminds the steward-leader to, "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you" (1 Pet. 5:7). Moreover, God's grace is sufficient to restore steward leaders when they fail. God's grace will make them strong when they are weak, and it will keep them upright and firm when they slide (1 Pet. 5:10).

The beginning and end of steward-ship is God. Leadership is never a destination but a process where God is continually working out His purposes in our lives. As steward-leaders we are partners with Him. We are not alone. God is with us!



The Stewardship Ministries department of the Inter-European Division (EUD) under the leadership of Paolo Benini (Director) and Corrado Cozzi (Associate Director) presents Christian stewardship as the "management of life." This wholistic emphasis was the focus of three major stewardship training events organized by the department in 2015, and supported by the General Conference Stewardship Ministries team.

The first program targeted Union and Conference treasurers and local church leaders from German speaking countries of the division, and it was held on the campus of the Bogenhofen Seminary, Austria, in July. A key component of this program was opportunity to discuss issues and share experiences in small groups.

The second event took place in September on the campus of the Romanian Adventist Theological Institute at Cernica, Romania for Slavic speaking countries with the Sabbath worship service televised live on Romania Hope TV.

The last one for the year brought together delegates from Belgium, Switzerland, France, Italy, Spain, and Portugal, and they met at the Adventist College, Olivera do Douro, in Oporto, Portugal.

In all, these three training events brought together over four hundred participants including a large group of young people who attended the program in Romania.



Leaders in consultation at Bogenhofen, Austria



Stewardship Training in Cernica, Romania

Training Seminars in Oporto, Portugal



GC Stewardship Ministries Visits EUD

interview

Where Is Your Heart?



Lowell Cooper (LC) interviewed by Larry Evans (LRE), DS Editor.

Canadian-born Dr. Cooper is a general vice president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. He holds a master of divinity degree from the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary in Michigan and a master's degree from Loma Linda University School of Public Health, as well as an honorary doctorate from LLU. Lowell's wife, Rae Lee, is a nurse and musician. The couple has two adult children.

LRE: You have served in a number of leadership positions in different parts of the world. As you look at the world church from your perspective, how important is stewardship to the mission of God?

LC: Very important. The church is the body of Christ and as such is called to carry on the mission of God. We must see ourselves as stewards before seeing ourselves as leaders. Leadership is then placed in the right framework—engaging others in advancing the objectives of someone else—in this case, God. The objective in Christian leadership

is to further the work of God, not to build my empire.

LRE: When we speak of stewardship, we normally think about the dedication of our whole self. What personal qualities does the effective steward-leader have, and can they be learned?

LC: I believe leadership and stewardship qualities can be developed. One quality that would need to be developed is a genuine interest in others. Self-interest diverts leadership from its real goal and ultimately undermines effective service. Another critical quality is that of integrity. This is where my inner motivations are aligned with my observable behavior, which in the end reveal the leader's inner motivations. We should also add humility to this list of essential qualities. Humility is the maintenance of self-confidence without the need for pretense or arrogance.

LRE: Are there qualities that disqualify a person from being an effective leader?

LC: I believe it is important to note that leadership is not about power and control. Yet, so often, that's the image we carry unconsciously. Leadership moves in a different direction. Christian leadership has a different dynamic. It is not the exercise of power and control but rather helping people to live according to a higher purpose. It is not necessarily about my pet project or me. It is more about helping people to see the larger purpose for their own lives and helping them move into the realization of that purpose.

LRE: Is there a point when the leader stops being a steward?

LC: No, there shouldn't be in Christian leadership. It infiltrates everything one does, really—the recognition that this is for someone else; this is not for me. It is the nature of the human makeup to default towards self-centeredness, and leadership can easily amplify that because of access to power, influence and information. Leadership happens at the intersection of information and influence. Opportunities provided a leader could be misused and at this point a person ceases to be a steward.

LRE: There are numerous models of leadership today but not many speak about the steward-leader. How would you describe this kind of leadership?

LC: In a sense this is coming back to Christian leadership. It is important to make a distinction between Christian leadership and the models of leadership that dominate the world. Leadership is not about my power or my ability to control somebody else. Rather, it is about helping to show another person or another group a way for them to find higher fulfillment in their lives. In Christian leadership, the attention isn't focused on me as a leader but upon the bigger purpose at hand.

LRE: Is it possible for a steward-leader to help create an environment where generosity becomes the norm rather than something to be promoted?

LC: I think we have to approach this from an



understanding of what we mean by generosity. If by generosity I am the one who makes a judgment call about your generosity based on your response to my priorities, I may draw the wrong conclusion. Generosity should be seen in light of how a person responds to the realization of another's need. My agenda should not be the basis of my judgments concerning the generosity of others. It is important for leaders to understand that generosity can burst out in so many different ways and be exhibited in a person's life without that person necessarily being overly committed to what I think is important.

LRE: It seems that one of the characteristics of Jesus was to release for a greater or more effective use the possibilities/abilities a person had. Isn't that what a leader does?

LC: I'm so impressed with the way Jesus spent the last few hours with His disciples before His crucifixion. I would think, from a leadership standpoint, this would have been an ideal time for Jesus to give specific instructions of what to do or what not to do. For instance, He could have settled some theological controversies that plagued the church through history. But He didn't talk about such things. Instead, He talked about relationship issues. "I am the vine, you are the branches. If you abide in me you will be fruitful." Jesus wasn't putting them on a trajectory of a certain list of activities. He was releasing them to life. He was enabling them to lead creatively out of relationship with Him.

LRE: Relationships are important but if we are giving emphasis to stewardship shouldn't we be speaking more about money or is it important to do so in the context of a relationship?

LC: I don't think that it is wrong to speak about finances. I believe financial needs should be addressed in an atmosphere of trust and there are two kinds that the steward-leader should consider.

There is the question of trust in the individual. Am I a trustworthy person? When I'm talking to someone about a project with the hope that they might provide some needed resources, it's important that I am seen as a trustworthy person. There is also a second of kind of trust, and that is a trust in the organization. People need to have a sense that this is an organization that keeps its word, that it has fair policies and is focused on the right mission or project, etc. When there is trust in leadership and in the organization, resources will come. When there is a lack of trust, resources will diminish. When you ask the question, "Is it appropriate to talk about money," the answer is, "Yes, it is." It is important that people understand how they can participate in something much bigger than themselves. Often their financial participation is the opportunity for them to live beyond the limitations of time and geography.

LRE: When speaking of finances, are there cautions the steward-leader should consider?

LC: I think it is exceedingly important when leading a stewardship emphasis that we approach the question of resources of any kind without using the argument of guilt. It can be a very powerful, and unfortunately, a very destructive argument for a life of stewardship, even if in the short-run it can unfortunately be seen as rather effective.

LRE: How do we motivate others to be better stewards?

LC: There are probably many ways. Example is a powerful motivator. This needs to be a part of our leadership. We can also share inspiring stories that show how generosity has resulted in the blossoming of blessings

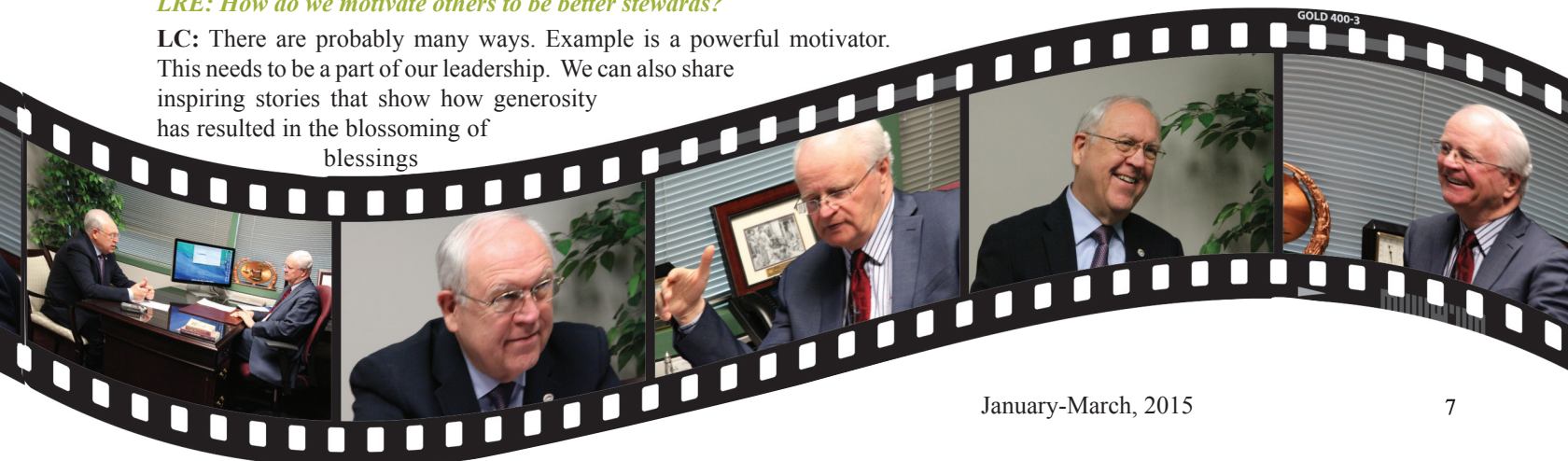
far beyond what a person might have thought possible. To help a person become generous is to sensitize that person to the whole range of needs that exists in society and the ways in which a person can contribute to the betterment of society or the building of another's life.

LRE: Does philanthropy have a role as part of our stewardship?

LC: Oh, absolutely! I personally prefer the term of philanthropy to fundraising. There is a tendency to think only in terms of money if I am involved in fundraising. But in philanthropy we are thinking about connecting resources to opportunities and helping people to invest, not just their bank accounts, but also their other energies. Jesus said something that was very important. He said, "where your treasure is there will your heart be also...." Isn't it just as true that where your heart is, there your treasure will be? I think a combination of philanthropy, stewardship and leadership is a way of helping people discover where to put their heart so that they themselves experience the joy of service.

LRE: Any closing thoughts?

LC: I really believe that the essence of the gospel is realized when we come to understand that life is ultimately about giving. We never come to the point where we have given enough. We never reach the point where giving is no longer needed because there are so many ways in which we need to be invested in improving life for someone else. This is the restoration project that the gospel talks about. Paul talks about preaching the "riches of the gospel." The gospel is more than "sin management." It is actually all about "life management."



Leadership and God's Grace



Paul Shongwe

Dr. Shongwe is the Director of the Stewardship Ministries and Church Development at the Southern Africa Union Conference in Bloemfontein, South Africa. He holds a D. Litt. et Phil. in Biblical Studies—Johannine Literature, from the University of Johannesburg. He is the recent past president of Helderberg College; was director for Development, and Public Relations and also served as Dean for the School of Theology and Religion, at Rusangu University (formerly known as Zambia Adventist University). Dr. Shongwe also did a 10-year stint in the banking world in social investment, government and community relations, mass-market banking, strategy and marketing.

"Is there anyone still left of the house of Saul to whom I can show kindness for Jonathan's sake?" (2 Samuel 9:1).

These are the words of King David directed to Ziba the servant of King Saul.

David had made a covenant with Jonathan his closest friend (1 Samuel 23:18) as well as with Jonathan's father, King Saul, David's sworn enemy (1 Samuel 24:20-22). He

promised both of them that he would show kindness (grace) to their families—that their families would not be exterminated once he had assumed the throne in Israel, or during his rule.

David's Inquiry

Upon inquiry whether there was anyone left in the house of Saul, King David was told of Jonathan's son, Mephibosheth, who was Saul's grandson. He was a special child in that he was a cripple. Mephibosheth was injured at the time of Saul's defeat at Jezreel. His nurse, who looked after his welfare, fled with him to protect him from being captured and killed by Saul's enemies. While fleeing, the nurse slipped and fell with Mephibosheth and he became crippled (2 Samuel 4:4).

What a nerve wrecking time it must have been for Mephibosheth when he was told that the king wanted to see him. The invitation to the palace was not a welcome relief. He thought that the day had finally come for him to be killed.

David's reputed strength against his enemies made him even more nervous. Mephibosheth was prejudiced against David, but to his greatest surprise and joy, King David dealt with him kindly.

On arrival at the palace, his greatest fears became his joys. Instead of a sword falling on him, the king showed unprecedented kindness (grace) inviting him to sit with him at the very table where the royalty dined.

David also assured Mephibosheth of his safety. In 1 Samuel 9:7, David said to Mephibosheth, "Do not fear, for I will surely show kindness to you for the sake of your father, Jonathan, and will restore to you all the land of your grandfather, Saul; and you shall eat at my table regularly."

Lessons of Compassion

Just like Mephibosheth hid himself far from Jerusalem where King David lived and hoped that he would not be found for fear of being killed, so we as steward-leaders, have experienced and benefited from the beauty of God's love that found us when we were running away from Him because of our sin. His grace followed us into our wayward journeys. It ran and snatched us from the fires of destruction where we were headed towards. It entered into our drug infested territories, all the time shouting and beckoning to us to leave our futile lifestyles and come home where forgiveness is plenty.

■ As steward-leaders, we are expected to help in allaying the fears of those who are far from the grace of God—those who are bent toward evil and afraid that they will be lost. We must bring them Jesus through our kindness, compassion and give them the assurance that not only does God forgive and love them, but that we do too.

When Mephibosheth reached the palace, he was welcomed and accepted. He participated fully and freely in the conversation and in dining with the king as well as his sons and daughters around the table. As steward-leaders, we must be accepting of those who have been brought from the wayward land of sin into the fellowship of believers. As we all sit at the table of fellowship of God's Word, there must be an uninterrupted communion and fellowship between the Master and all the sons and daughters of God, remembering that the playing-field is level for all of us. Common to all of us is the blood that found us in our sin, full of dirt, lost and full of shame, then forgave us and washed us perfectly clean.

I want to think of David as a steward-leader, who understood that his role was first that of a steward then a leader. He knew that as a king he had to manage

a country and serve a people who did not belong to him. He knew there was an Owner who would hold him accountable for how he treated those God had entrusted to him.

As a steward-leader, David became faithful by keeping the promise he made to both Saul and Jonathan. Certainly, Saul and his descendants did not deserve to be treated kindly. Nevertheless, as a steward-leader, David went beyond the call of duty and showed undeserved kindness (grace) and love. We too are exhorted to remain faithful and loving to those who need us most—at times when they are weak, vulnerable and undeserving.

■ As steward-leaders who have been adequately provided for with grace, mercy and love from above, we too must perceive such kind gestures of abundant grace and mercy as giving us the opportunity of being kind to those we are given the privilege to lead.

When Mephibosheth arrived at the palace of king david, he sat at the main table next to the king. When the food was served, he too was served the best and not the crumbs that fell from the king's table. He was served the same delicacies with which the king was served.

So, David treated Mephibosheth with the same treatment he lavished on the princes and princesses. He was accepted as part of the family and participated in everything that took place at the palace.

■ As steward-leaders, we are expected to treat those we lead as equals. None should be preferred or favored from another just because they have a better status. People from all walks of life, whether they be of royalty or from humble homes, whether rich or poor, deserve to be heard and attended to in a manner that will give them dignity and respect.

The grace of God invites us all to the table. None should be given priority because they are better lettered than others. No one should be given favors because of their high position in other circles. Once we are brought to the table of grace, we all assume prince and princess status, and we are given the right to participate in all the rights, privileges and responsibilities of the fellowship where God has placed us.

■ As steward-leaders, we are expected to learn from the Master Jesus, as exemplified by King David, who willingly forgave, showed kindness to and restored the fortunes of Mephibosheth when he did not expect or even deserved it.

■ As steward-leaders we are expected to be accepting of those who were once far from our fellowship, letting them participate fully at the table of fellowship. We must strive for this everyday. We must endeavour to leave people better than we



found them.

■ As steward-leaders, we must avoid revenge and an inclination to retaliate. We may feel that we have the right or are even entitled to treat others in a mean way because of the hurt we have suffered. But when looking at Christ who is our example, and the example of King David, we must strive to show kindness even to those who have done injustices to us or even injured us.

■ Sometimes, as steward-leaders, we will be favored with an opportunity to oversee those who once treated us unkindly and mercilessly. When fortunes have thus turned in our favor, should we do the same as they did to us? No, instead, we should look to the example of Jesus and David who never took advantage or pleasure in the unfortunate circumstances of others. Rather, we should do the unexpected by showing unprecedented levels of kindness and forgiveness.

Forgiveness

There is power in forgiveness. David knew the power of God's forgiveness for he, himself, was generously forgiven. We see him willingly extending this gesture to the family of Saul who earlier was bent on destroying him. As steward-leaders, we are expected to show kindness to others as we ourselves have been shown mercy.

When we have truly been touched by His grace, we will show greater understanding to those we are called upon to lead. We will consider the weaker ones among us, and just like Christ and David, protect and defend them.

The radical grace of Christ ought to flow from us to those around us, especially when they do not expect or deserve such a favor. When we shut the door against those who need us, we surely would have invoked destruction upon ourselves.

As God's steward-leaders, since we are called upon to lead at such a difficult time as this, we must ask God to make us leaders who have a heart that is shaped, influenced and controlled by the grace of God.

Time-Out for Leaders



Audrey Andersson

Audrey Andersson is the Executive Secretary of the Trans European Division. Although a theology graduate, her road to ministry had a detour into the commercial world where she worked as an Editor for a national magazine and ran her own business, before beginning to work for the church.

Regular commuters are creatures of habit. Sitting in roughly the same place on the train every day, we become nodding acquaintances with our travelling companions. Every morning like clockwork she put on her make up on the train. He took out his flask of coffee and a sandwich and ate his breakfast. Some crawled on board and continued sleeping almost before they sat down. Others could never make it in good time, always ran on board just as the doors were closing.

In 2014, in an effort to reduce a rising number of accidents involving pedestrians, a leading mobile provider in Japan developed an app which displays a yellow banner and freezes a smart phone screen when it senses the user is simultaneously surfing and walking.

Multi-tasking, cramming in as much as possible in the least possible amount of time is normality in the 21st century.

By contrast Jesus never hurried. He had a three-year time frame for his ministry, yet he was not tyrannised by time. He went from place to place, taking the necessary time to teach and heal: engaging with the individual as well as the multitudes. He reprimanded his disciples for sending mothers and children away. Instead, Jesus took time to bless the children, and based on his parables, we can conclude he took time to observe the simple beauties of nature as well as the challenges of daily life.

Psalm 90:12 says: “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.” **Time is a non-reusable gift from God. We can kill time, but we can’t resurrect it. Once it is gone, it is not retrievable. As leaders we are often so busy trying to cram something into every minute that we lose sight of how these minutes look from an eternal perspective.**

The Bible doesn’t talk about time-management, but it does talk about redeeming time. Paul writes: See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Eph. 5:15-16, *NKJV*).

How we invest our time reveals our priorities. Everyone has the same 168 hours a week. On average a person will sleep 56 hours, personal hygiene will account for another 24, while 50 hours will be spent in work related activities, leaving about 35 hours to use on other things. How we invest them speaks volumes. Do we spend them on the internet, watching TV, with our families, in Bible study or prayer?

Leaders have a tendency to say “yes” when they should say “no”. Good stewardship involves reevaluating our calendars: saying no to some activities. If we don’t manage our time, others will do it for us, setting agendas, which may be good in themselves but can drain and limit our usefulness.

Good stewardship is creating some space or margin in your life. Not filling every second or minute with activity; rather planning for “margins” or “breathing spaces” between events, and meetings. We all have experienced the unexpected traffic jam, someone else being delayed, and suddenly our day spirals out of control.

As leaders, we need to create room for God. Time to study the Bible and listen to His voice. Spending time in prayer— asking God to make us aware of opportunities in which to invest our time, not to over fill the minute but rather to use it in a way that will yield eternal dividends.



Stewardship and Salvation

Recently I was requested, to give a short devotional presentation during an orientation for local church treasurers in a large metropolitan area. During the presentation I asked, “Is faithful stewardship important for salvation? Will the unfaithful steward lose his or her salvation?” One treasurer gave an emphatic, “No,” and a church pastor said, “Yes.” Who was right?

Many faithful church members are holding a mistaken view that faithful stewardship is optional and does not affect our salvation. Numerous Bible texts, however, show that our obedience and our faithfulness with what has been entrusted to us is important. Our positive response will be richly rewarded, not only on earth but also in the earth made new. Those who misapply what God has given them will not only lose what they have on earth, but will also lose their salvation in the end.

The widow of Zarephath responded positively to the invitation of Prophet Elijah to use her last meal to feed God’s servant first, even though there was a great famine. She shared all that she had. Her act of faith was richly rewarded. From that moment on she had sufficient food to feed herself and her son until the famine was over.

Though the poor widow of Jesus’ time had given only two small copper coins—worth only a fraction of a penny—to the Lord’s treasury, that act of generosity did not escape the watchful eyes of Jesus. Noting the sacrifice of the widow Jesus said, “For they all contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, her whole living” (Mark 12:44, *RSV*). The Lord rewarded her richly by supplying all her needs.

In the parable of the foolish rich man, Christ showed the folly of those who make the world their all. In Luke 12:16-21, the rich man had a blessed opportunity of being God’s almoner, but he thought only of ministering to his own comfort. Abundant provision for the wants of many had been made in the blessings bestowed upon the rich man. But he closed his heart to the cry of the needy and died a miserable and lonely death.

Ellen G. White tells us that, “Desiring to gain a reputation for self-sacrifice, liberality, and devotion to the Christian faith, Ananias and Sapphira sold their property, and laid part of the proceeds at the feet of the apostles, pretending they had given it all . . . they thought to gain the reputation they coveted, and at the same time keep back part of their money . . . but they were cheating the Lord . . . He slew them both, as a warning to all of the danger of sacrificing truth to gain favor” (*Medical Missionary*, p.126).

Many Bible stories relate how men honored God through the proper use of the gifts that He has given to them. Job was a good example of one who can be immensely rich and yet be generous to his fellow men and faithful to God at the same time. When he was put to the test, he passed with flying colors. God’s stewards today can be like Job by using their time, talents and treasure to glorify Him and be prepared to inherit an infinitely greater treasure in heaven.

Does our faithful stewardship affect our salvation? The answer is a definite, “Yes!”

The steward-leader does have a sacred responsibility, therefore, of teaching faithfulness and obedience whether it be during our sermons or offertory remarks. By word and example we are to correct the mistaken view that faithful stewardship is optional. It does affect our salvation.



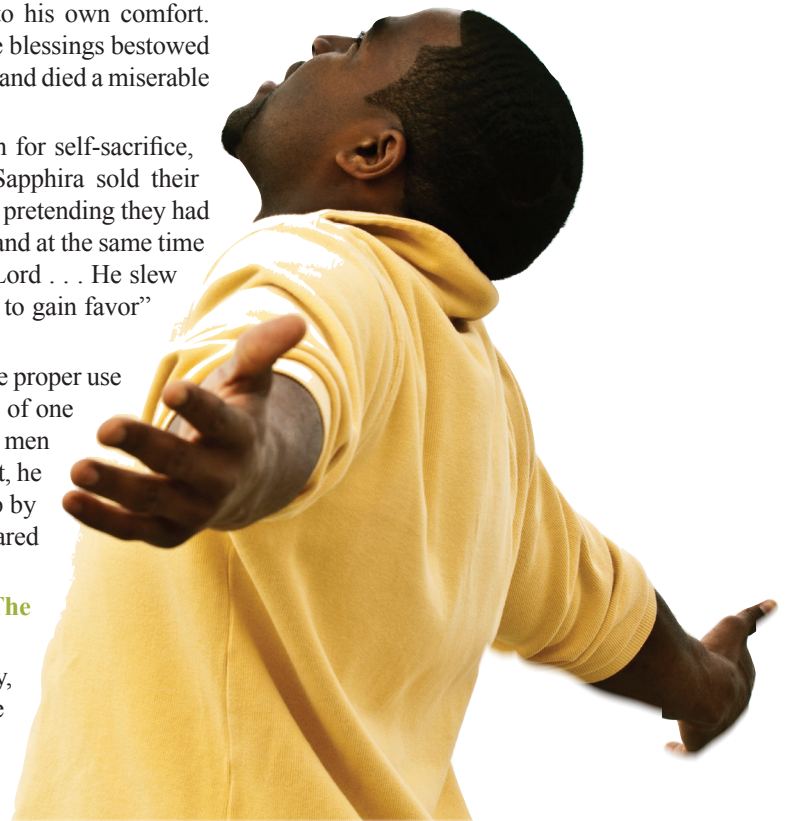
Mark Chan

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He is married to Debbie, with two adopted daughters, Janelle, 15 and Janene, nine.

In April 2013, he used the Stewardship theme as evangelistic outreach topics in Singapore.



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Leaders in *God's Kingdom*



Paolo Benini

Paolo Benini is the director for the Personal Ministries/Sabbath School, Global Mission and Stewardship Ministries departments of the Inter-European Division.

For 31 years he worked in the Italian Union as pastor, departmental director, field president and Union President. For 10 years he was a guest teacher in biblical doctrines at Villa Aurora University in Florence, Italy.

He loves cycling in the open air and fixing old bicycles and, whenever possible, he makes his own special homemade “Ezekiel” bread.

He is married to Angela Lazzara and has two sons, Samuele and Gianluca, and one daughter, Annalisa. He is also the proud grandfather of precious grand daughter, Mila.

We know the book of Revelation as a prophetic document. It is! It has been written with the clear purpose to reveal things that will happen shortly, but as in the book of Daniel, there are prophetic parts and also spiritual insights. It is the revelation of Jesus Christ. In addition to addressing prophetic issues, it also speaks about mission, the destiny of mankind and the person of Jesus Christ.

Another important topic in this book is human vocation. The book has many verses that deal with this subject. We will look at some issues related to anthropological and sociological concepts.

God’s Radical Calls in Revelation

From the beginning, God gave a specific call to man. We read in Gen. 1:26, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness...” By creating us in His own image, He is expressing His purpose for us, which is to be like Him. In the same context, He gives man the responsibility of having “dominion” or governance over creation by ministering to it and acting as His stewards of it. In Gen 2:15 we read that God asks Adam and Eve to “keep” or take care of the garden. This verb “to keep or oversee” is used throughout the Bible as a sign of our responsibility.

Centuries later, through Moses, God called his people to be a “kingdom of priests” (Ex. 19:6). We find the same call in a prophetic messianic context, in Is. 61:6, “But you shall be named priests of the Lord, they shall call you ministers.” In the New Testament it appears even more frequently than it does in the Old Testament. Jesus calls his followers to be His disciples and apostles—two nouns with similar but not identical meanings. Paul pens that we are “ambassadors for Christ” (1 Cor. 5:20) and “God’s administrators” (1 Cor. 4:1). Peter gives emphasis to God’s calling of the believers, clearly stating that everyone born again in Jesus is a priest in His kingdom (1 Cor. 2:5, 9).

However, more than in any other book, Revelation emphasizes specific names for God’s believers. He uses the term “angels” in Rev 2:18-29 in the message to the church of Thyatira. John first addresses “the angel” of this church but then continues and writes “to the rest in Thyatira” (v. 24). He clearly addresses the whole community as “angels.”

In the same way, the three angels of Rev. 14 are committed to preach the final message to the world—to every tribe, tongue, nation and people. We believe that these three angels represent the “remnant” of God’s people on earth. In Rev. 22:9, we read the admonition of the angel to John, who, having seen the great vision, is ready to fall down on his knees and worship the angel. The angel says, “I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers the prophets.” So the angel states clearly that we are also “prophets” of the Lord. This same call is seen in Rev. 11:18, “The time has come to give their reward to thy servants, to the prophets, and to the saints, and to them that fear thy name.” Two more names are identified: “servants” and “saints.”

Finally, we have the names “kings and priests” (Rev. 1:6; 5:10 and 20:6). The use of these names is a continuation of their usage in the Old Testament but also as used in 1 Peter 2:4, 5 and 9.

Thus, in the book of Revelation, we have a great list of names for the believers: angels, prophets, servants, saints, priests and kings.

Kings and Priests

Let’s concentrate for a moment on “priests and kings.” Revelation continues in the same way and tells that this is the great call for all believers—from the Trinity itself (Rev. 1:4, 5). Twice we read: “He has made us priests and kings” (Rev. 1:6 and 5:10). The word “made” in Rev. 14:7 describes the creative power of God. The creation is the result of His omnipotent power. With the same power, He makes us priests and kings.

Even if Revelation starts with greetings from the Trinity, *Jesus* is the one who

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acts. He saves us by his blood and makes us kings and priests through His power.

What a message this is! While giving His life for our salvation, Jesus, also made us priests and kings. **The divine plan doesn't end with our forgiveness, salvation, justification and redemption. It continues by Jesus acting to recreate us in His image and restoring our identity and mission by making us priests and kings. Jesus the Creator, the Savior and the Redeemer is the same One who re-creates priests and kings: i.e. stewards!**

Dignity and Responsibility in Revelation

What has been said, has great and meaningful implications for us. In God's eyes, every human being has great value. As He created us in His own image, we are distinct from all the rest of creation. There is a substantial and existential dissimilarity. From the beginning, even before creation, His great vision for mankind was for them to be in His own image, in governance over His creation and partners in the administration of His creation.

We know that something happened in human history that destroyed this plan. Someone acted in evil to erase God's image in man. We know the devil's malefic purpose: he created divisions, (even between God and man), slavery to evil and submission of one man to another, and male over female. He produced discrimination and homicide. He killed our identity, dignity and life. Men became arrogant and proud, believing that they have the right to dominate others. Some elevated themselves as gods and reserved for themselves the control of people's bodies and minds.

This is not the end of the story. In God's original plan, man had the right to have direct access to God—to be in relationship with Him without mediation and with no need of propitiation. In time, a priestly clergy rose to the role of mediation between God and man. A clerical priesthood was interposed between God and man. **Now, with Jesus, we all have free access to God's Temple (Rev. 7:15), and are able to re-establish a good relational connection with Him.**

As through Moses, so it is through Jesus: "... you will be for me a kingdom of priests." Luke 4 states that, Jesus reaffirmed this divine project by reading Isaiah 61 during His very first Sabbath in ministry. **God performs a great deliverance and gives back our dignity, identity and mission.**

In the book of Revelation, we find that Jesus provides salvation and commitment (Rev. 1: 5, 6; 5: 9, 10). Just after reading that He made us to be kings and priests for His Father (Rev. 1:5, 6), we see Jesus presented as our High Priest (Rev. 1:12-18). We understand this text in the following way: Through His death and resurrection, He became our High Priest and King, and through Him, His God and Father has become our God and Father, and now we can address Him as "Our Father." Now we can serve Him as His kings and priests.

Now We Are Kings and Priests...

See what great love the Father has given us in naming us the children of God; ... and at present it is not clear what we are to be. We are certain that at his revelation we will be like him... (1 Jn. 3:1, 2).

He came to bring the Kingdom, (Mat. 3:2; 4:17; 10:7), to re-establish the original plan and recreate us in His own image. As it was at the beginning,

(Gen 1:26-28), the same Creator and Savior wants to give us this renewed (reclaimed) identity.

Paul penned that through Him we are new creatures (2 Co 5:17), enabling us to become like God in true righteousness and holiness (Eph. 4:20-24). In Jesus we have a new starting point, a new beginning, a new possibility to be ministers/stewards in His Kingdom. **We become ministers of His grace, His love, His mission, to His creation!**

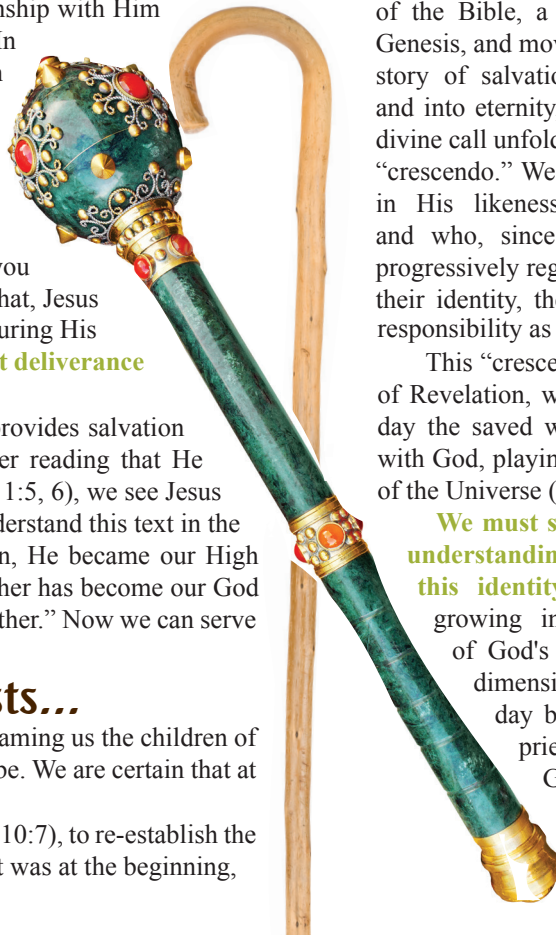
This is only the beginning. The growth towards all of this has just begun, and we have the possibility and the right to grow (Eph. 4:15). Not only this, but "When He appears, we shall be like Him," His kings, priests and stewards. We will live and rule with Christ," forever! (Rev. 20:4).

Conclusion

In the light of this great truth of the Bible, a theme that starts in Genesis, and moves through the entire story of salvation, until Revelation, and into eternity, we see this specific divine call unfolding like a continuous "crescendo." We see mankind created in His likeness at the beginning, and who, since since the fall, are progressively regaining their freedom, their identity, their dignity, and their responsibility as stewards, in Christ.

This "crescendo," states the book of Revelation, will continue until the day the saved will sit on the throne with God, playing their role as judges of the Universe (Rev. 20: 4- 6).

We must start now to grow in understanding, and experiencing this identity. It must start by growing in our understanding of God's plan, living out the dimension of being a steward day by day, i.e. becoming priests and kings of God.



young adult

Random thought . . .

. . . What is the impact when I "follow" people or pages on social media?

Follow to Lead!



Pavle Trajkovski

Pavle is a psychology undergraduate, currently pursuing a degree in conflict studies. He lives in Belgrade, Serbia, where he serves his church. He is passionate about music and social justice. In his free time he enjoys singing and making mixtapes. He dreams about becoming a poet.

“Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.” (1 Cor. 11:1, ESV)

I grew up as a PK (a pastor’s kid, for those not familiar with the abbreviation), and throughout my childhood I was constantly reminded that I needed to be a role model for other children. Needless to say, I didn’t like this responsibility. Growing up, I often found myself in situations where I was considered a leader, either formally elected or chosen by unspoken consent. As flattering as that may have been, I was never comfortable with this role. I felt that too much was expected of me. Let’s be real, we do expect a whole lot from leaders. They must be honest, confident, committed, self-aware, full of empathy, good communicators, humorous, able to self-regulate, delegate, motivate, inspire, uplift, encourage, withstand. . . . I wouldn’t be surprised if one day, walking on water and turning water into wine ended up on the list of the “top-ten-qualities-a-leader-must-posses.”

So why do we expect so much from such a person? Is the leader really so important? Does the leader’s personality really generate so much influence?

I am reminded of a Youtube video that I watched last summer. It is an amateur video, most probably taken with a smartphone, and it shows a shirtless guy, hilariously dancing on a grassy field, in front of a bunch of uninterested spectators. His audience is sitting and lying around on the grass in a setting that seems to be an outdoor music festival. The video is narrated by Derek Sivers, a relatively famous entrepreneur. The narrator acts as a commentator of what is seen in the video—a live example of how a movement is formed. In the beginning, the shirtless guy is all alone and his dancing makes him look weird, to say the least. **Very soon, however, he is joined by another guy, the first follower, who imitates his ridiculous dance moves.** Soon after that, still another guy also joins in. The three of them start to look like a crowd. Quickly, another guy jumps up, and then a guy and girl, and then three more people, then half a dozen more, then about ten more, and so it continues. At that point, the people who were just watching start to realize that the impromptu open-air dance-floor is ‘the place to be,’ and remaining seated on the grass is no longer ‘cool.’ Within less than three minutes, almost everyone on the field was a part of the party. A movement was formed.

The narrator of the video explains that credit for the creation of the movement is mostly due to the first follower. Yes, it takes courage to be the lonely guy with a novel idea that almost everyone finds odd. It wasn’t before the first follower joined that this idea had any real impact. It was the joint effort of the leader and the first follower that attracted the second follower. From then on, the influence and the numbers grew with geometric progression.

What I learned from this example is that perhaps being an influential leader is actually all about being a follower. Instead of putting a lot of pressure on leaders, maybe we should just start seeing them as followers. We should accept God as the only leader. He is, in fact, endowed with every conceivable quality and skill that makes a good leader. He is the perfect role model. Humans, as His stewards, are just followers. Their purpose is to attract the attention of others. By imitating Him, they inspire others to join the dance, and the numbers grow and the crowd becomes bigger! I can’t help but wonder what it will be like when we all join that never-ending heavenly party. What a dance that will be!

<http://youtu.be/fW8amMCVAJQ>

“Follow Me...” (Jesus, Mat. 4:19; 9:9; 10:38).

GC Session 'Behind the Scenes'

Let me begin by welcoming you, in anticipation, to San Antonio where the Church will be holding the 60th General Conference Session from July 2-11, 2015. You and probably many other members may ask how this event is planned, organized and how things seem to fall into place when the Session is held. The amount of time and the number of individuals who are involved in the planning process is just unbelievable. It may surprise you that planning for this monumental event begins approximately ten years prior to the date.

It all begins by sending out a document called the “Request for Proposal” to cities considered to have adequate facilities needed for the Session. This document details the needs of the organization ranging from the dome capacity, hotel accommodation, labor relations, airport facilities, and reasonable access to the country as far as immigration is concerned. Once the documents are filled out and returned to us, a comparative city summary report is prepared and placed side by side. The participating cities are invited to make presentations to the Annual Council following the GC Session year. It is at this meeting that the decision is taken regarding the location of the next session. Therefore, the location for the GC Session of 2025 will be announced in 2016!

With this announcement, the work has just begun. The General Conference Session Planning Committee, chaired by one of the General Vice Presidents, is charged with organizing the meeting. This Committee is subdivided into nineteen committees with specific terms of reference and timelines. Subcommittees include: Audio Visual, Exhibition, Music, Program, Platform, Secretariat, Shipping and Procurement, Session Management. There are many others. Each subcommittee determines their needs in terms of the program, people and money needed to accomplish their goals. This is subsequently compiled by the Session Treasurer and a budget is presented to the General Conference Session Planning Committee for approval.

You may ask what I consider the most challenging issue with regards to organizing this meeting. The answer is simple. You are! Why? How can I be sure that you will obtain a visa so that you can come and occupy the rooms we have booked for you nine years ago and avoid attrition? What security apparatus should I have in place so that you are safe during the meeting? What kind of meals can I serve you that will be acceptable to all the other delegates? How many translators can we provide to insure that non-English speaking delegates can understand the meeting proceedings? These are just a few of the challenges that keep us awake at night, but we are encouraged by the organizational structure of our church and the many dedicated technical staff who will be working to make sure we have a smooth and spirit-filled meeting in San Antonio!



George Egwakhe

George Egwakhe is an Associate Treasurer of the General Conference, serving on many related committees and boards of institutions. He holds an MBA from the Central State University of Oklahoma. Since 1981 he has served in the treasury of the church and it's institutions in several countries in West and Central Africa, as well as at AIIAS in the Philippines, and then as Treasurer for the SSD. George is married to Victoria, and they have three daughters.



Alamodome, San Antonio, Texas, USA (photo courtesy of ANN)

Quotes on Steward-Leadership

"I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd puts the sheep before himself, sacrifices himself if necessary" (John 10:11, *Message*).

"Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself. He had equal status with God but didn't think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what. Not at all. When the time came, he set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became human! Having become human, he stayed human. It was an incredibly humbling process. He didn't claim special privileges. Instead, he lived a selfless, obedient life and then died a selfless, obedient death—and the worst kind of death at that: a crucifixion" (Philippians 2: 5-8, *Message*).

Heaven is watching to see how those occupying positions of influence fulfill their stewardship. The demands upon them as stewards are measured by the extent of their influence. In their treatment of their fellowman, they should be as fathers,—just, tender, true. They should be Christ-like in character, uniting with their brethren in the closest bonds of unity and fellowship (Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers*, p. 495).

"The higher the position a man occupies, the greater the responsibility that he has to bear, the wider will be the influence that he exerts and the greater his need of dependence on God. . . . When a burden bearer desires wisdom more than he desires wealth, power, or fame, he will not be disappointed. Such a one will learn from the Great Teacher not only what to do, but how to do it in a way that will meet with the divine approval" (Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, 30, 31).

"Christians are quite serious in believing that when they gather together for worship and work, God is present and sovereign, really present and absolutely sovereign. God creates and guides, God saves and heals, God corrects and blesses, God calls and judges. With such comprehensive and personal leadership from God, what is the place of human leadership?

"Quite obviously, it has to be second place. It must not elbow its way to the front, it must not bossily take over. Ego-centered, ego-prominent leadership betrays the Master. The best leadership in spiritual communities formed in the name of Jesus, the Messiah, is inconspicuous, not calling attention to itself but sacrificing anything in the way of conviction and firmness either" (Eugene Peterson, Introductory Comments to 1&2 Timothy and Titus, *The Message*).