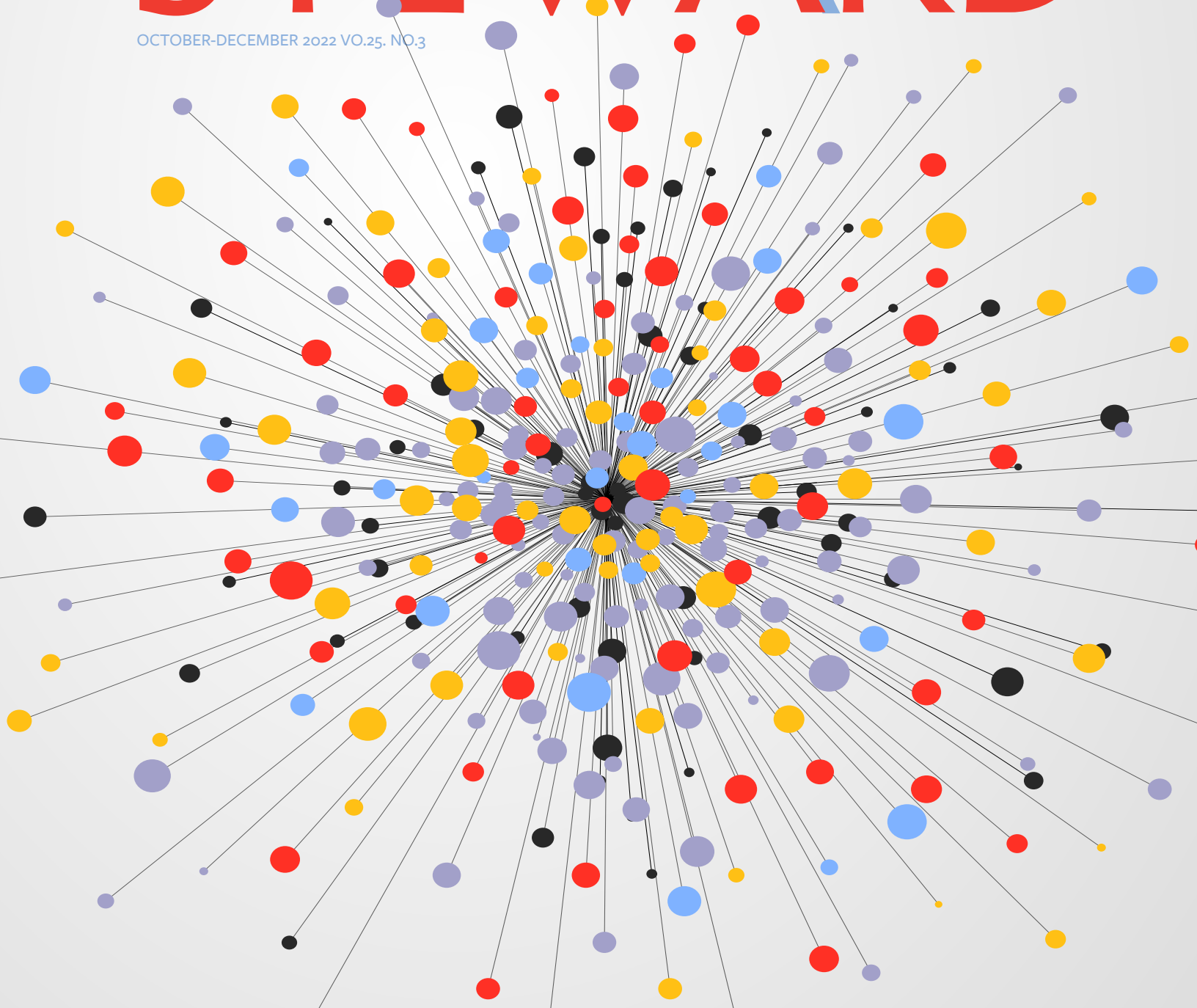


DYNAMIC STEWARD

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WHEELS OF MISSION

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GOD FIRST
ADVENTIST STEWARDSHIP MINISTRIES

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Mission Refocus” is the theme that could summarize both the recent Stewardship Ministries Advisory and the 2022 General Conference Annual Council. After hearing the reports, we celebrated over the increase in global church membership and the exceptional growth in some areas of the world. Another reason to rejoice is the incredible financial support that our members are providing to the church; in most places, the financial situation has bounced back to the pre-pandemic era. However, we cannot dismiss the suggestion from Elder G. T. Ng, the retired GC executive secretary, in support of a realistic report from secretariat: “To deflate our corporate ego” and to acknowledge “the work done and the work yet undone.” Ng is warning us against triumphalism! As the body of Christ, the future of our mission will depend largely on our capacity for self-awareness.

For an objective assessment of our achievement, no exercise is more appropriate than to revisit Revelation 14:6–12, the formulation of God’s mission for His remnant church. The opening lines of the three angels’ messages provide an adequate yardstick: “Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. He said in a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water’” (Revelation 14:6, 7). According to this important passage, our last-day mission is counted done when all people groups have received the eternal gospel, which is an invitation to worship the Owner and Provider of all.

In this regard, two indicators have been flickering red for the past fifty



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MISSION REFOCUS

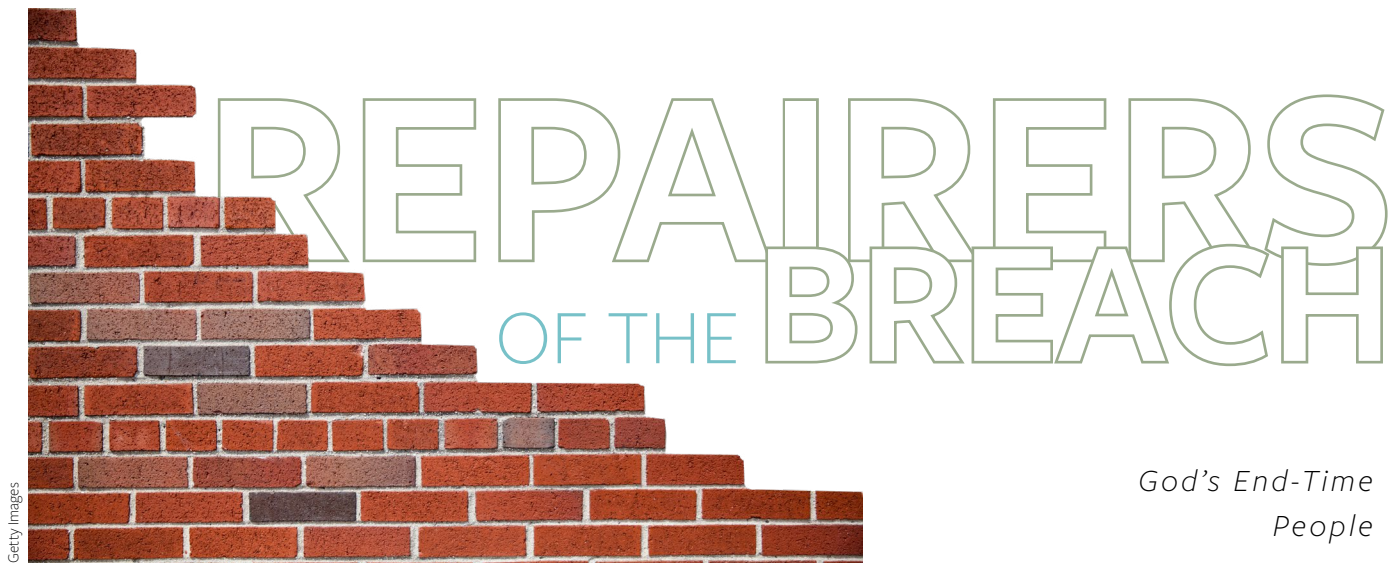
years: The number of cross-cultural missionaries sent by the world church is on the decline, and the ratio of offerings to tithe has constantly gone down during the same period. Are there some relationships between these two variables? This is worth some study. How do we reverse this malevolent trend to complete the mission? Being conscious that we are not yet where we are supposed to be is a good starting point for a change of direction. What else can we do?

The abridged version of the sermon “Repairers of the Breach,” the articles “We Count What We Value,” “Stewardship Lead Measures,” and other articles in this issue offer some interesting suggestions to actualize “Mission Refocus.” However, I strongly believe that the launchpad to propel the church into a

different mission gear comes from the rhetorical question of Dwain Esmond: “Can a church that worships at 37% or 52% effectively proclaim a worship-centered message to the world?” Our message is about worship, and giving, service, and witnessing are expressions of worship. Henceforth, going back to the altar individually, regularly, and with our family will make “Mission Refocus” the new way of being for God’s people.

Aniel Barbe, Editor

¹ The set of resources for the “Back to the Altar” initiative can be accessed at: <https://stewardship.adventist.org/back-to-the-altar—annual-council>



*God's End-Time
People*

“Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings.” – Isaiah 58:12

We can see by all that is happening in the world today that we are living in the end of time. The world is growing old like a garment, and society is disintegrating. There is a loss of urgency by many regarding the second coming of Christ. I speak directly to your hearts today, asking that you bear God's burden to bring our people into line with heavenly instruction from the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. Are we ready today to finish His work? I believe that God is preparing us for the final days, and will outpour the Holy Spirit. That is why we call for revival, reformation, humility, and repentance, placing ourselves directly under God's guidance.

How does God want us to live in these momentous times just before Christ's soon return? What is our proclamation and lifestyle role as humble, faithful Seventh-day Adventists in this chaotic world?

Isaiah 58 gives us a bold key to unlock our role and ministry at the end of time. It opens to us our needy spiritual condition and our dynamic, designated role by God Himself in these last days

of earth's history. The introduction in verse one is straightforward and commanding. God intends for us to sound the alarm, beginning with His church and then to the entire world.

Welfare Ministry, a compilation of Ellen G. White's writings, highlights that the kind of ministry that will bring life into the churches are mentioned in Isaiah 58: “The work of the gospel is to be carried by means of our liberality as well as by our labors. When you meet suffering souls who need help, give it to them. When you find those who are hungry, feed them. In doing this you will be working in lines of Christ's ministry. The Master's holy work was a benevolent work. Let our people everywhere be encouraged to have a part in it.”

Moreover, the first verses of Isaiah 58 point out the wrongdoing of some members of the church. Verses 2 and 3 speak about people who are self-absorbed in their meaningless motions of artificially worshipping God. Verse 4 shows God reproofing them for hypocritical outward godliness and fasting, telling them they are actually involved

in taking advantage of others, debating, arguing, and ultimately fighting with people. In verse 5, God asks the question, “Is it a fast that I have chosen?” God is saying, “Why do you pretend to love Me, and at the same time you are hurting your fellow human beings?”

When we reach verse 6, God is saying, “Don't be self-absorbed, self-centered, or self-focused. Take care of those around you who are in need. Help people who are chained to horrible habits. Bring relief to those who are weighed down with burdens. Help those who are enslaved to become free through Christ's power. Remove the hurtful circumstances that keep people from their full potential. You have food, share it. You have a roof over your head, share it. You have clothing, share it. Stop pretending to know Me. Really show it by doing something for your fellow human beings,” as developed in Welfare Ministry, page 30.

We are to follow Christ's example. Christ's comprehensive ministry, which reflected His righteousness, helped people physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually. His ministry involved teach-

ing eternal truths and putting them into practical application, lifting people from degradation to see what He ultimately wanted for them: eternal life. The practical application of our acceptance of God's truth is what profoundly tells those around us that we know Jesus. Does this mean that we are to simply preach a social gospel? Absolutely not.

We are to proclaim, with the Holy Spirit's power, the spiritual and prophetic three angels' messages of Revelation 14 and the fourth angel's message of Revelation 18. The practical application of those profound prophetic messages is seen in the tangible things He does through us in fulfilling Christ's ministry. People are longing to see the love of God shown in practical ways in our lives since we have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, since we keep the commandments of God, and since we have the faith of Jesus. When they see the unselfish love of God manifested in our lives as a practical testimony, they will ask why we act this way. They will be driven to the foot of the cross, to Christ's amazing grace, and to His changing power.

Back to our text, verse 8 explains the result of this practical application of God's wonderful everlasting gospel. Verses 9 and 10 proclaim:

- 1 We will call on the Lord, and He will answer, saying, "Here I am."
- 2 If we remove the heavy burden we place on others by our faultfinding and gossiping, and stop pointing fingers and criticizing others, but rather help them with their needs, then light like noonday will dawn in the darkness.

As a result, verse 11 indicates:

- 1 The Lord will guide us continually;
- 2 He will spiritually satisfy our soul in the spiritual drought;
- 3 He will strengthen our bones;
- 4 Because of our connection with Him as the Living Water, we will flourish like a watered garden with a spring of water that never fails.

Verse 12 calls us:

- 1 To build up the old waste places;
- 2 To raise up the foundations of the past;
- 3 For each of us to be called "the Repairers of the Breach" and "the Restorer of Streets or Paths to Dwell in."

Isaiah 58 gives us a bold key to unlock our role and ministry at the end of time.

Ellen G. White says, "With the work of advocating the commandments of God and repairing the breach that has been made in the law of God, we are to mingle compassion for suffering humanity. . . . Love revealed for suffering humanity gives significance and power

to the truth. It is only by an unselfish interest in those in need of help that we can give a practical demonstration of the truths of the gospel."²

What a call to each of us to repair the breach, to restore God's Holy Word, showing the world what God intends to do in each life through supernatural power, changing our hearts of stone into hearts of flesh, thus glorifying God and bringing practical godliness to those who need to know Him. God calls us to lift up the Word of God, His everlasting truth and law. Let us respond to His call and be "the Repairers of the Breach."

This abridged version of the sermon preached by Elder Ted N. C. Wilson for the 2022 GC Annual Council was done by Emmelyne Virassamy.

¹ Ellen G. White, *Welfare Ministry* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1952), 29.

² *Ibid.*, 32.



Scan the code to watch the full sermon.



"WHAT AN AMAZING PRIVILEGE to provide faithful stewardship support to God's church during these last days of earth's history. The dedicated use of our time, talents, abilities, and resources can be very instrumental in 'repairing the breach' of a fuller understanding of the Sabbath blessings and the fuller comprehension of Isaiah 58, with its strong emphasis on Comprehensive Health Ministry. God calls for all of us to engage in practical missionary work for others, thus showing the power and efficacy of His precious gospel message. As we practically live out the spiritual and eternal principles of God's Word, we will be providing the Holy Spirit the opportunity to work marvelously through us in showing the restorative blessings of the Sabbath and the work of Comprehensive Health Ministry. Complete spiritual commitment to using our time, talents, and resources produces a wonderful potential for God to bring about revival, reformation, humility, and repentance as we point people to Christ and His soon coming. Christian stewardship is instrumental in God's plans to bring the three angels' messages, and particularly the third angel's message, to the forefront as we approach the Lord's return."

Elder Ted N. C. Wilson

MARCOS FAIOCK BOMFIM

What is the goal of the Stewardship Ministries Department? What do we value most as the outcome of our work? The answer to those crucial questions will depend on what we understand as the department’s vision and mission.

VISION

“People putting God first.”

It is told that someone asked Michelangelo about what he was carving out of a huge granite block. “A horse,” he answered. “But how can you carve a horse out of a block of granite!” the person responded in amazement. “It’s easy,” said Michelangelo. “My task is just to remove what is not the horse.” Interestingly, he could visualize a horse inside that granite block, and that vision allowed him to remove everything that wouldn’t pertain to it. Having a vision was crucial to molding his work strategy and shaping the outcome.

It is also extremely important for us to have a clear vision of what we expect as the outcome of our work in the Stewardship Ministries Department. Should it be to have the church’s safes full of money, or to lead people to “fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His

judgment has come” (Revelation 14:7)?¹ Should pastors and spiritual leaders become just materialistic fundraisers or spiritual soul seekers on Christ’s behalf? The answer to these questions will determine the strategy that we will adopt.

An appropriate vision for the Stewardship Ministries Department will only develop after understanding what stewardship is. An interesting definition says that “stewardship is the management of that which belongs to another,”² i.e., which belongs to God—the Owner of all things (Psalm 24:1–3; 1 Corinthians 10:26).

Humans were assigned as stewards of God’s possessions at Creation (including themselves), and any “person may

[choose to] be a good steward or a bad steward.”³ True happiness and meaning in life may only be found through appropriate management of self and social and material environments, according to God’s specifications. But how to manage our own life and what surrounds it?

Jesus stated a key principle of management (or stewardship) that, if practiced, will bring everything else into the right perspective. He promised that if we “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, . . . all these things shall be added to you” (Matthew 6:33). True success in all areas of life can only be obtained by putting God first.

It is because Satan knows this that his



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Vision, Mission, and Goal in the Stewardship Strategic Orientation

WE COUNT
WHAT WE VALUE

“aim has been to lead men to self first,”⁴ instead of God first. And this kind of mindset “has filled the world with misery and strife,”⁵ becoming the main reason for environmental and economic problems, marriage failures, and the breakdown of any other social relations.

Even so, humanity still insists on putting self first. Some time ago, I saw in Cairo, Egypt, a huge sign on a very busy street saying, “Putting you first.” It summarizes well the selfish mindset that permeates the world and stands in opposition to God and, consequently, to happiness and success. “Selfishness,” says Ellen G. White, “is the essence of depravity, and because human beings have yielded to its power, . . . nations, families, and individuals are filled with a desire to make self a center.”⁶

If Satan aims “to lead men to self first,” filling “the world with misery and strife,” we are called to partner with God in opposing Satan’s work. Not only are church members invited to put God first, but “every nation, tribe, tongue, and people” are called to “fear God and give glory to Him” (Revelation 14:6, 7), recognizing Him while managing life and the spiritual, social, and material environments.

And God should be put first not only in the realm of values, but also be given primacy in our daily schedule and practices. You will find in the “I Promise” Commitment Card⁷ seven crucial points in which we are invited to trust God and partner with Him in His final mission.

And because this vision, “People putting God first,” is broader than the scope of a single department, the Adventist Church has created many ministries, or departments—like Education, Sabbath School and Personal Ministries, Health, Family Ministries, and Women Ministries, just to mention a few—all doing their part in nurturing people to embrace the principles of stewardship, or management, at large.

MISSION

“Inviting people to trust God as Owner and Provider, and to partner in His final mission through regular and systematic giving”

Our mission statement has to do with the specific contribution of the Stewardship Ministries Department to this broad “God first” vision, which should also be carried out by all other church departments. Since its inception, the Stewardship Department’s mandate has been to focus, but not exclusively, on “inviting people to trust God as Owner and Provider, and to partner in His final mission

And God should be put first not only in the realm of values, but also be given primacy in our daily schedule and practices.

through regular and systematic giving”

There are several key elements in this mission statement. First, the Stewardship Ministries Department is not in the business of inviting people to give, but to trust God, as Owner and Provider.

A second point to be highlighted is about partnering with God and acting as His agents on earth. This partnership, which is proposed by Him and embraces privileges and responsibilities, also includes our finances (Proverbs 3:9, 10; Malachi 3:10; 1 Corinthians 3:9; 16:2). In line with those Bible verses, Ellen G. White says that “the Lord made a special covenant with men, that if they would regularly set apart the portion designated for the advancement of Christ’s kingdom, the Lord would bless them abun-

dantly, so that there would not be room to receive His gifts.”⁸ She also adds that “if men will become channels through which heaven’s blessing can flow to others, the Lord will keep the channel supplied.”⁹

The final emphasis in the mission statement is that people are invited to exercise trust in God primarily through regular and systematic giving. Why an emphasis on regular and systematic giving? Why not simply suggest that people always give “following your heart”?

Even though the heart may be impressed by God in many circumstances, impressions alone should not be the only criterion for making choices. Those who trust too much in their feelings, always allowing their impressions or inclinations to command their actions, frequently ignore that the heart is naturally selfish and “deceitful above all things” (Jeremiah 17:9). Ellen G. White says that because “selfishness is the strongest and most general of human impulses, . . . in our labors and gifts for God’s cause, it is unsafe to be controlled by feeling or impulse.”¹⁰

Therefore, instead of acting purely upon feelings, we are encouraged by God to “act from fixed principle, following the Saviour’s example of self-denial and self-sacrifice.”¹¹ At the same time, we need to pray for a change of heart, which is promoted by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Ezekiel 36:26, 27)—a heart inclined to do what is right. Then, “the cause of benevolence would no longer be dependent on the uncertain gifts of impulse, and vary according to the changing feelings of men.”¹²

Because “possessions are carriers of affections,”¹³ we are encouraged by God to place our resources, regularly and systematically, where we want our hearts to be (Matthew 6:21). And what should be the regularity and the system by which we give tithe and regular offerings? The regularity is determined by the receipt of



an income or increase, and our primary giving system, even for offerings, is proportioned to the income, or percent-based (Deuteronomy 16:17;

1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 8:12). This kind of regular and systematic giving is called Promise giving,¹⁴ and those who give under this system are called Promisors.

In a paradigm shift, God becomes the center of giving, and Promisors are no longer “controlled by feeling or impulse,” because they know it would be dangerous. They no longer give as donors or philanthropists, to help, sponsor, or support something or someone when they feel like giving, nor do they yearn for any human recognition after giving. They give as a response to God’s blessings, and not in expectation of them.

GOAL

“At the start of each year, an additional 2% of the local church membership is participating in tithing and regular and systematic offerings.”

How do we know if we are succeeding in inviting people to trust God and partner in His final mission through regular and systematic giving? How do we as-

sess our progress? Should we consider the increase in tithe and offering income in a congregation or field as an indicator of increased trust in God on the part of its members? Not at all.

Tithe and offering income growth is not necessarily an indication of spiritual growth in a congregation. It may be just a reflection of the blessing that one single person has received in that congregation or field. And as our mission statement is focused on spiritual growth instead of financial growth, we are supposed to count people’s participation, not money, i.e., the proportion of those engaged in regular and systematic giving. As the saying goes, “We count what we value, and we value what we count.”

So, if you are a stewardship leader, the most important question at this point is what proportion of the total membership is currently giving regular and systematic tithes and offerings? Is that proportion of Promisors growing or shrinking? Those questions must be thoroughly answered; data must be accessed, and plans accordingly devised, otherwise, the vision of “people putting God first” will never be accomplished.

But how can we assess this information? The General Conference has made available the ACMS (Adventist

Church Management System),¹⁵ which is able to synchronize treasury and secretary information, revealing the current percentage of incognito members of a given congregation or field that are Promisors, or regular and systematic givers. If your field is already using that system, you can assess that information in seconds.

By primarily assessing people’s participation, stewardship leaders reveal that they want more than simply to promote an increase in the church’s financial income, as important as it may be for the accomplishment of Christ’s great commission. They would want to see more and more people knowing God more intimately, trusting Him, learning how to live by faith, and, finally, populating heaven after Jesus’ second coming. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

(As a continuation, read Aniel Barbe’s article about the lead measures for Adventist Stewardship Ministries.)



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² Mel Rees, Basic Stewardship Manual (Singapore: General Conference of SDA, Far Eastern Division, Department of Church Ministries, 1990), 7.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ellen G. White, Counsels on Stewardship (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn, 1940), 24.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Find the “I Promise” God First Commitment Card here: <https://stewardship.adventist.org/commitment-card-promise>

⁸ White, Counsels on Stewardship, 77.

⁹ Ibid., 36.

¹⁰ Ibid., 25.

¹¹ Ibid., 25.

¹² Ibid., 199, 200.

¹³ Marcos F. Bomfim, “Nurture and Heart Retention,” Dynamic Steward 22, no. 2 (2019): 16.

¹⁴ See more about Promise offerings (regular and systematic) here: <https://stewardship.adventist.org/promise-offerings>.

¹⁵ In 2022 the ACMS was already in use in 10 divisions and 89 unions.



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Lighting Up All Corners

2023 Offertory Devotional
Reading and Videos



Readings
and Videos



GOD FIRST
ADVENTIST STEWARDSHIP MINISTRIES

LEAD MEASURES

Adventist Stewardship Ministries



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ANIEL BARBE

If you are in the middle of a huge parched land and someone announced: “You’ll find food and water over there,” his or her words would ignite hope and motivation. But unless the person shows you the way to reach the food and water, it won’t change much of your reality. This is how lead measures function. They are the highways to our aspired destination.

Many orientation documents, with inspiring vision, well-articulated mission, and clear goals, end, unfortunately, in a drawer or in an unopened computer file. Our greatest challenge as a church, or a department, is not planning and setting end goals (we are usually good at planning), but implementation. Lead measures, in a strategic document, act as facilitators of implementation.¹

The GC Stewardship Ministries’ Strategic Orientation document contains three lead measures that inform on how to grow a God-first culture in the church and society at large.

LEAD MEASURE 1 SPIRITUAL EMPOWERMENT

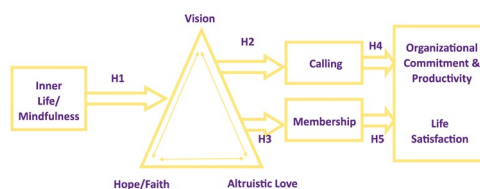
We read from the GC Stewardship Ministries’ Strategic Orientation document: Our first task is to make sure “members are nurtured spiritually, with a focus on the God First principle, through home visitations, weekly offertory devotionals, regular stewardship sermons, an-

nual commitment ceremonies, and other relevant activities.”²

The first lead measure tells us that we nurture a God-first culture when we assist people to establish and grow a personal relationship with God. A God-first lifestyle is a spiritual venture, and it is groomed using spiritual means. This aligns with apostle Paul’s teachings: “Explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words” (1 Corinthians 2:13). Stewardship leaders are spiritual leaders in essence.

The spiritual leadership model, proposed by Professor Louis Fry, a specialist in leadership, can help us understand how spiritual empowerment functions.³ His starting point, at the left of his model, is the inner life of the spiritual leader. Spiritual empowerment is the work of spiritual leaders, who themselves are spiritually empowered. While empowering others, they are in the process of cultivating their personal spiritual lives.

The second component of the model presents the three essential elements: hope/faith, vision, and altruistic love. These elements must translate into what we do and teach in stewardship ministries. We are called to share an inspiring vision about our identity as humans, cre-



Louis Fry’s Model of Spiritual Leadership

ated and redeemed as God’s stewards. This vision also embraces the idea that all are designed to partner in His mission. We communicate hope/faith by sharing the conviction that God’s grace transforms us into stewards, that we have already received what it takes to complete God’s final mission, and that God has rewards for the faithful. People experience altruistic love when we serve them with an unselfish spirit and share about the unconditional love of God for everyone. Our first concern is not people’s wallets, but their salvation and abundant life.

As a result of hope/faith, vision, and altruistic love, followers first acquire an assurance about their calling, a situation that brings meaning and purpose to one’s life. Secondly, they develop the conviction that they are valuable members of a body, creating a sense of belonging. Combined, a sense of calling and belonging are powerful sources of intrinsic motivation. They shape the choices and actions of people.

According to Fry’s model, the outcome of spiritual leadership/empowerment are individuals who are committed to the organization they belong to and the fulfillment of its mission. This is total member involvement! As an additional outcome, the recipient of spiritual empowerment enjoys a high level of personal life satisfaction.

LEAD MEASURE 2 STEWARDSHIP EDUCATION FOR ALL

Our second lead measure is summarized in these words: “All segments of the church membership, including prospective members, should receive adequate training in regular and systematic giving, as well as their responsibility of supporting the local and worldwide mission equitably, . . . the management of personal finances, creation of wealth, and other relevant topics. Teachings will be based on the Bible, Ellen G. White’s book *Counsels on Stewardship*, and her other writings.”⁴

This second lead measure represents the bulk of what we do as stewardship

leaders and educators. However, we often assume that an individual or a family knows about the lifestyle of a steward by simply growing up in the church or attending church for an extended period. This assumption can be faulty. “Normative ignorance” is a common phenomenon among church-attending Christians.⁵ This is particularly true for stewardship instructors. Unless we are intentional educators of all segments, many may not understand the implications of a God-first life. This resonates with the instruction of apostle Paul: “And how can they know who to trust if they haven’t heard of the One who can be trusted?” (Romans 10:14, *The Message*).⁶

The second segment of this lead measure aims at assisting a broader group, the community at large, to manage and create wealth. I’ll mention two examples, in support of this segment. Recently, while consulting the Global Tithing and Offerings Report for 2019, my attention was drawn to tithing per capita of several world divisions.⁷ Almost half of the divisions had a tithing per capita below \$100. There are several good interpretations for these figures: 1) the adverse economic conditions prevailing in these territories, 2) a need for a membership audit, 3) an issue of unfaithfulness, and 4) many faithful members are earning very little to no income. Further studies may help to identify the exact cause for the low tithing per capita for each entity, but we wouldn’t be wrong to assume that it is often a mixture of causes. It appears that reason four is particularly true in places where the church is currently experiencing the highest growth. Unless we intentionally assist the church membership in the area of growing wealth, a large proportion of our faithful members won’t be able to partner or partner at a higher financial level in God’s final mission.

A second example is the current dire economic condition that many are facing today. Both inside and outside the church, individuals and families want to sharpen their skills to manage resources in order to cope more effectively with the prevail-

ing adverse reality. This is the current felt need, and as other felt needs, it represents an entry point for the gospel. Financial literacy lessons that are Bible-based may eventually lead people to connect with Jesus, the Flawless Steward.

LEAD MEASURE 3 BUILDING TRUST & CONFIDENCE

It is not advisable to have too many lead measures. The third lead measure is about creating a climate of trust and confidence: “Stewardship leaders encourage and work together with the leadership of the church to establish an internal control system, comply with the Use of Tithing Guidelines, assist in ensuring that regular financial information is provided to all members, and engage in other actions that contribute to building trust.”⁸

It is well-established that trust is an accelerator to partnership. The inspired words of Ellen White speak to the importance of this lead measure: “Those in responsible places are to act in such a way that the people will have firm confidence in them.”⁹ Unfortunately, when we consider that, worldwide, 1 out of 10 administrative entities are receiving an adverse or disclaimer audit report, we can legitimately admit that there is a need for improvement in this area of building trust and confidence.

A balanced approach is essential for the execution of this lead measure. While we constantly encourage the church leadership to demonstrate trustworthiness, it is our duty to invite the membership to remain faithful to God though any perception of unfaithfulness on the side of leadership. Our first reason for faithfulness is God’s unchanging faithfulness but not humans’ faithfulness which is not a constant.

Besides acting as highways and pathways to our goals, lead measures help us to measure progress. End goals inform us if we have reached the destination, lead measures, and their associated actions and initiatives, tell us if we are on the right track to the goal, and what are

the needed corrective measures. An adapted version of the Stewardship Ministries Assessment Model Template may serve as a tool to track the execution of lead measures.¹⁰

Lead measures are our allies for a successful stewardship ministry at any level of the church. Prayerfully consider the three lead measures that are recommended here: spiritual empowerment, stewardship education for all, and building trust and confidence. Adapt, reformulate, or craft your own lead measures. Those who track their journey reach their destination.



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¹ Chris McChesney, Sean Covey, and Jim Huling. *The 4 Disciplines of Execution: Achieving Your Wildly Important Goals* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2012).

² Adventist Stewardship Ministries, “Stewardship Ministries Strategic Orientation 2022–2025,” Stewardship Ministries, accessed October 17, 2022, [https://stewardship.adventist.org/strategic-orientation-2020-2025-\(pdf\).pdf](https://stewardship.adventist.org/strategic-orientation-2020-2025-(pdf).pdf).

³ Louis W. Fry, “Spiritual Leadership: State-of-the-Art and Future Directions for Theory, Research, and Practice,” in *Spirituality in Business*, ed. Jerry Biberman and Len Tischler (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 106–124.

⁴ Adventist Stewardship Ministries, “Stewardship Ministries Strategic Orientation 2022–2025.”

⁵ Christian Smith, Michael O. Emerson, and Patricia Snell. *Passing the Plate: Why American Christians Don’t Give Away More Money* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), Kindle.

⁶ Scripture quotations marked *The Message* are from *The Message*, copyright © 1993, 2002, 2018 by Eugene H. Peterson. Used by permission of NavPress Publishing Group. Represented by Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

⁷ Archives, Statistics, and Research. *Annual Statistical Report*, vol. 2 (Silver Spring, MD: Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, 2020), <https://documents.adventistarchives.org/Statistics/ASR/ASR2020A.pdf>.

⁸ Adventist Stewardship Ministries, “Stewardship Ministries Strategic Orientation 2022–2025.”

⁹ Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 13 (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1990), 198.

¹⁰ Adventist Stewardship Ministries, “Stewardship Ministries Assessment Model Template,” Stewardship Ministries, accessed October 17, 2022, <https://stewardship.adventist.org/strategic-plan>.

ACHIEVING PARITY OR BETTER BETWEEN TITHE *AND* OFFERINGS

JIBIL SIMBAH

During the recent 61st General Conference Session, a delegate asked the GC treasurer to elaborate on the disparity between the tithe and offerings, and how this issue could be solved worldwide.

We can praise God for the regular growth in tithe over the years. Some territories experienced a drop in tithe during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, but the volume of tithe is already back to or higher than it was before the pandemic. In contrast, offerings, either given as combined offerings or mission offerings, are not necessarily growing at the same pace. The importance of offerings to further world mission and the mission of the local church is undeniable. Offerings function as a catalyst for the dissemination of the three angels' messages, hence speeding up the second coming of our Lord. Church members need to understand our current missional context. This article shares the experience of a pastoral district where the giving of offerings is closing the gap with what is given as tithe, and in some instances, exceeding tithe.

STEWARDSHIP ENRICHMENT PROGRAM

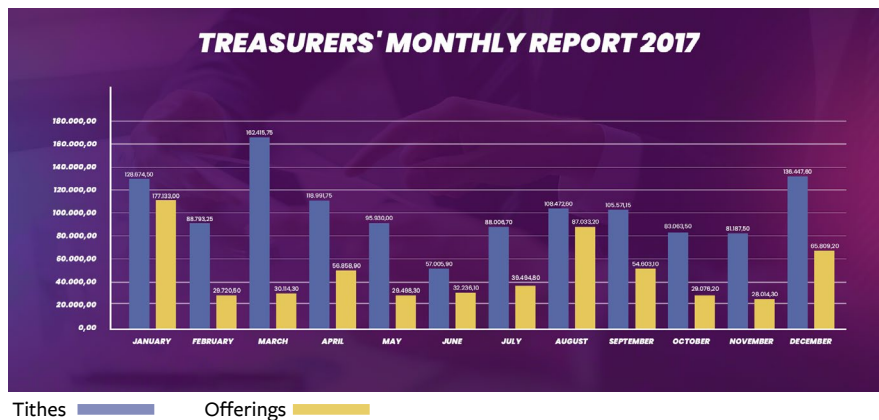
Some time ago, I heard the amazing testimony of dedicated and committed church members in the Baan Seventh-day Adventist Church, of the South Philippines Union Conference. These members are giving their offerings as a percentage of their incomes, with 90 percent of the membership who are giving 10 percent or more as regular and systematic offerings. This giving pattern has a significant impact on the missional capacity of their local church. I wanted to learn more about the factors behind this revolutionary generosity.

It all started in November 2017, when Pastor Roger Jimenez, the stewardship director of the local mission, held a Steward-

ship Enrichment Seminar at the church. The seminar conveyed the conviction expressed in these words: "In the days of Israel the tithe and freewill offerings were needed to maintain the ordinances of divine service. Should the people of God give less in this age? The principle laid down by Christ is that our offerings to God should be in proportion to the light and privileges enjoyed. 'Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.' Luke 12:48. Said the Savior to His disciples as He sent them forth, 'Freely ye have received, freely give.' Matthew 10:8."¹

Following this seminar, the local church adopted some key resolutions. First, they would provide stewardship education at regular intervals during the year. They came up with the JAJO Initiative, referring to the month of January, April, July, and October, during which they would have a special emphasis on promoting stewardship. This has been implemented since 2018.

Besides ensuring the regular and updated education of the church members, all the elders of this local congregation recommitted to be faithful in tithe and decided to give another 10 percent as offerings. As leaders of the church, they wanted to set an example of percentage-based giving for offerings and to demonstrate the importance of offerings. Another initiative was the creation of care groups, each under the leadership of two church elders. The church membership was divided into these care groups. In





Tithes — Offerings

these care groups, members were educated about percentage-based giving for offerings and encouraged to revalorize what they were already giving, besides returning a faithful tithe.

Rapidly, the members of the care groups started to experience exceptional blessings from God as a result of their new giving practices. These testimonies were shared with the entire church during church meetings, such as men’s ministry, Adventist youth meeting and children’s ministries. This motivated more members to give their best percentage as regular and systematic offerings. As a result, there has been significant and steady growth in offerings at the Baan Seventh-day Adventist Church since 2018. This is obvious when the treasurer’s report for the year 2017 is compared with the year 2021 (see Graphs 1 and 2).

OUTCOMES OF STEWARDSHIP ENRICHMENT PROGRAM

The comparison of the year 2017 with 2021 indicates a slight increase in tithe of

1031 percent in the local currency. I believe that the plausible explanation is there was either a diminution or no increase in the income of the members in this church community, 2021 being a year affected by COVID-19 and its sequelae. However, when the total offerings for 2017 is compared to 2021, there was a significant growth of approximately 69.04 percent. These figures from the Baan SDA Church testify that it is indeed possible to change the practice of offerings among church members; the gap between offerings and tithe is not a fixed reality.

As other outcomes, the local leaders observed that there was no more a need to “sell” projects to members for them to be generous. They now give out of genuine love for God and His mission. Previously, some members were giving large amounts of money to support some projects. This situation often resulted in pride and a spirit of competition. Giving as a percentage in response to God’s ownership and provision has contributed to growing a brotherly atmosphere within

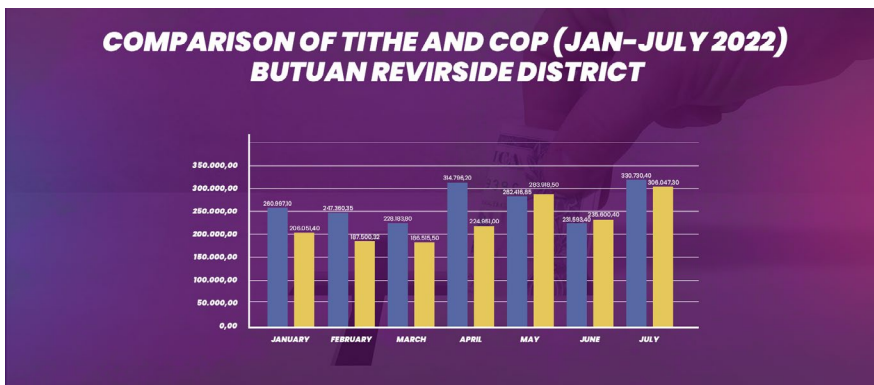
the local church. Finally, the local church has the necessary funds to cover all expenses to accomplish its God-given mission.

Interestingly, the growth pattern at the Baan church is not an isolated incident. The effect is spilling over to the district of which the Baan church is a part of (see Graph 3). We can imagine what would happen if every member around the world understood and practiced this God-given concept, giving offerings every time they receive an income or increase from God. Ellen G. White writes: “If the plan of systematic benevolence were adopted by every individual and fully carried out, there would be a constant supply in the treasury. The income would flow in like a steady stream constantly supplied by overflowing springs of benevolence.”²

Churches in other localities will have to adapt the strategy used by the Baan church, but there are some basic principles that are worth replicating:

- Be intentional to address the reality about offerings.
- The stewardship message should be repeated regularly to all segments of the church.
- The church leadership, not only stewardship directors, are fully involved in teaching, providing encouragement, and modeling stewardship principles.
- Spread the stories of God’s reward for the faithful.

As we shout “I Will Go” in our churches, let us emulate the Baan church by shouting “I Will Go with my best percentage-based regular and systematic offerings.”



Tithes — Offerings



Jibil Simbah is currently serving as the Stewardship Ministries Department director of the Southern Asia Pacific Division of Seventh-day Adventists.

¹Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1890), 528.

²Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1872), 389.

SACRIFICE (ZEBACH)

& JEROBOAM

Lessons about Unity for the Church Today

DEMÓSTENES NEVES DA SILVA

Jeroboam, son of Nebat, was the first monarch of the Northern Kingdom after the national division that took place among the Israelites (1 Kings 12). In the Southern Kingdom, whose capital was Jerusalem, the throne belonged to Rehoboam, son of Solomon. Jeroboam, however, understood that the Israelites' journey from the north to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices in the temple would threaten his kingdom. So, soon after securing power, he decided to divert the Israelites from "sacrificing" (zabach in Hebrew) at Jerusalem (1 Kings 12:26–31). What does this prohibition from King Jeroboam tell us about the danger of diverting from and the potential of a centralized giving system?

CENTRAL PLACE OF WORSHIP

In ancient Israel, the people were asked to sacrifice animals in one single place of worship to be appointed by God. The pagans, however, worshipped in a decentralized way and offered sacrifices in different places, as they saw fit. As a means of preventing idolatry, the Law stipulated that, when the people would enter the Promised Land, they should offer a sacrifice (zabach) only in the place chosen by God (Deuteronomy 12:5, 6, 11; Leviticus 17:1–9). Although there are other words for sacrifices and offerings in the Bible, the term zabach is used frequently to indicate that the sacrifice of worship could only be made in a place appointed by God.

The term zabach applies to various sacrifices, such as thanksgiving, vow, voluntary offering (Leviticus 7:12–16), Passover offering (Exodus 34:25), and sin offering (Numbers 15:24–27), which were offerings and sacrifices suitable for worship. Nevertheless, these offerings would only be accepted if offered at the place indicated by God.

The choice of a single site for the zabach, however, had a broader significance. Being the only authorized place of the zabach as they entered Canaan, it would be a serious offense to offer sacrifices anywhere else (Joshua 22:23–29). Initially, the right place to offer the zabach was Shiloh, and later on, the temple at Jerusalem (2 Samuel 7:13; 1 Kings 3:2; 8:17–19, 44, 48; Isaiah 18:7; Jeremiah 3:17). Therefore, the worship represented by the sacrifice should be centralized.

Other practices were linked to the place chosen for the sacrifice. When the Lord repeated the command of zabach (Deuteronomy 12:11), He emphasized that tithes, offerings, vows, and other offerings were also to be delivered only in the place appointed for zabach, and nowhere else (Deuteronomy 12:2–11).

This determination was later reaffirmed concerning the temple (2 Chronicles 7:12), the place where the storehouse was located, which was the center for receiving tithes and offerings, and the place where the Levites ministered (Deuteronomy 12:11; 2 Chronicles 31:10–21; Malachi 3:8–10).

Without Levites, there would be no zabach, because the sanctuary service

in which the sacrifice was offered was only functional by the work of the Levites (Numbers 18:2–5, 22, 23), who were supported only by the tithe, which, in turn, was to be delivered only where the zabach was offered (Numbers 18:21–24; Deuteronomy 12:11).

DRIFTING FROM GOD'S INSTRUCTIONS

Jeroboam's order (1 Kings 12:27) stood in opposition to the instruction for an exclusive place for sacrifice, as mentioned in Deuteronomy 12:5, 6, 11. To avoid national reunification, and to fulfill his political project, Jeroboam dared to contradict the prophetic revelation of the zabach law, so he established a competing worship and sacrificial system.

In 1 Kings 12:27, the expression "offer sacrifices" refers to the requirement of divine law not to worship (sacrifice) in different places, as idolaters did (Deuteronomy 12:1–6).

However, in resistance to Jeroboam, those of the people who chose to be faithful "came to Jerusalem to sacrifice to the Lord God of their fathers" (2 Chronicles 11:16).^{*} Their participation evidently included all the acts of worship mentioned above. Therefore, to sacrifice was to worship according to the teachings and requirements of the temple, which inevitably included tithes and offerings, as worship in Israel included a set of centralized and integrated procedures.

By deduction, as Jeroboam prevented the northern tribes from offering the zabach in Jerusalem—the only place indicated by God—he was also diverting



The doctrinal unity was guaranteed by the Levites and priests, who were supported by the tithes and offerings to minister in the place appointed for the zebach.



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the tithes and offerings that should have been delivered there. As the payment of the priests and Levites was centralized and coordinated by the storehouse, the Levites expelled by Jeroboam returned to the temple in Jerusalem because they were faithful and knew that they were registered there to receive their portions (2 Chronicles 11:13–17).

In the biblical account (1 Kings 12:26–28), Jeroboam rejected God’s plan. He decentralized worship, erecting two large shrines, as well as several smaller altars and temples on the mountains, or “high places.”

IMPLICATIONS FOR TODAY

Adopting the zebach law implied accepting the legitimacy of the sanctuary as the only place of worship. This included acknowledging the role and ministry that God had designated for His spiritual leaders: “For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge, and people should seek the law from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts” (Malachi 2:7). Furthermore, it involved bringing tithes and offerings to the storehouse, thus contributing to spiritual and national unity.

Therefore, the law that determined the place of zebach suggests some spiritual lessons for us today:

- 1 The importance of theological unity. A single center of worship prevented idolatry. In the place chosen for the zebach, the teachings were based on the Law and the prophets.
- 2 This doctrinal unity was guaranteed by the Levites and priests, who were supported by the tithes and offerings to minister in the place appointed for the zebach. Thus, doctrinal unity and faithfulness in tithes and offerings were united in the act of worship in the place chosen by God for the zebach.
- 3 Jeroboam’s fear is only justified as one understands that the unity of the people of Israel depended on the system of worship, and transgressing the law of the appointed place for the zebach was the way to dismantle the unified system of worship established by God.
- 4 Furthermore, sacrificing in Jerusalem implied national reunification through the regular meetings of worship appointed by God. Jeroboam himself declares that he intended to prevent national reunification by turning the people away from the place appointed for the zebach, as directed by the Law (Deuteronomy 12:6, 11; 1 Kings 12:27).

Therefore, preventing sacrifices at

the temple in Jerusalem had far-reaching implications for the apostasy and continuation of the rift between the northern people of Israel and the tribe of Judah.

The biblical account of the splitting of the Israelite nation fostered by Jeroboam and followed by his attack on the zebach principle offers valuable lessons for the church today. It indicates the doctrinal importance and organizational system of the church as means of the wider unity of the denomination throughout the world. That unity needs a single, united, committed ministry maintained through the storehouse.

Although worship today does not require a single, fixed place, the spiritual lesson of theological, administrative financial unity brought by the teachings of the place of zebach and the storehouse remains.

The success of the church today, as in Old Testament days, depends on being in every way united administratively, financially, ministerial, doctrinally, and spiritually, as the commandment of a single place for zebach teaches us.



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FAMILY FINANCIAL PLANNING GOD'S WAY



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JOHN AND DELIVON FRANCIS

Today more than ever before, families are faced with a multiplicity of problems caused by the Russia-Ukraine war, inflation, global food, and energy shortages, unwinding asset bubbles in the United States, debt crises in developing countries, and the lingering impacts of COVID-19, causing related shutdowns and supply chain bottlenecks. In addition, we see governments across our various continents imploding among themselves as they battle to combat these issues.

As God's commandment-keeping people, we need to hold fast to the promises of God, trust Him to lead us in these challenging times, and give us the wisdom to use the resources He has blessed us with wisely.

Many families face struggles ranging from job or income loss to the numerous consequences of dealing with the anxiety and fearfulness of an uncertain future. We are told in Psalm 37:25: "I have been young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread."¹

We can have hope in these uncertain times if we put our full confidence and trust in God, as He will provide. Throughout a family's life, they will transition through stages of various life cycles. For example, young married couples are likely to face the challenges of setting up a household, managing debt, and teaching children about money. However, an older person (60 plus) will be more interested in wealth transfer and retirement issues.

Wherever we are in our life stages, God has a plan for us, which we will discuss in more detail in our next issue.

Below are 13 practical ways that can help you work through a financial crisis:

1 Don't panic or make impulsive decisions. (Proverbs 11:14; 12:15; 15:22; 19:20, 21)

Perhaps the worst thing you can do in a crisis is decide to purchase an item when you are experiencing emotional turmoil. Slow down and seek godly counsel from spiritually mature people whom you trust. Seek out people with testimonies who are willing to share to encourage others.

2 Prioritize your spending. (1 Timothy 5:8)

Put your family first, and start with the essentials: tithe and offerings, food, utilities, shelter, and transportation. After that, prioritize your expenses from the most important, such as insurance, to the least important.

3 Reduce expenses and be content with less. (1 Timothy 6:8; Hebrews 13:5)

The Lord instructs us to be satisfied when our basic needs are met. However, we live in a culture of consumption that tells us our "wants" are really "needs." Make the tough choices, and cut or defer unnecessary expenses.

4 Increase income. (1 Corinthians 10:31; 2 Thessalonians 3:10)

Look for temporary employment with essential businesses (grocery stores, drug stores, cleaning, food

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in these uncertain times if
we put our full confidence
and trust in God,
as He will provide.

delivery, package delivery, etc.), or be creative, like selling items of value on Facebook, eBay, Amazon, or other social media platforms. Explore all benefits available to you, such as unemployment or other types of support. Do not let pride become a barrier.

- 5 **Build an emergency fund.** (Proverbs 10:4, 5; 21:20; 1 Corinthians 16:2)

Look to set aside money to be used in the event of an emergency. If you're working, reduce your expenses and build up your savings.

- 6 **Be generous and serve others.** (Luke 12:16–21; 2 Corinthians 8:2, 3; Galatians 6:9)

God's economy is often the opposite of man's economy. For example, being outwardly focused on the blessing and serving of others in a time of crisis brings us joy, while hoarding does not. In Scripture, we see the church of Corinth, which was generous out of an abundance of joy in a test of affliction and severe poverty.

- 7 **Grow spiritually and practically.** (1 Corinthians 3:18)

Studies show that keeping yourself mentally, spiritually, and physically engaged during a stressful time improves your outlook and emotional response. Keep to a routine, get exercise, and stay connected with people. Replace mindless activities, such as hours on Netflix and social media, with developmental ones, such as forming a book club and reading a spiritual book together.

- 8 **Be one with your spouse.** (Genesis 2:24; Mark 10:8; Ephesians 5:28–33)

Financial struggles and stress are an unhealthy combination for most marriages. Recognize your marriage is more important than any crisis, and “lock arms” by loving and caring for each other, putting your spouse's needs ahead of your own, and making thoughtful decisions together.

- 9 **Involve your children.** (Proverbs 22:6)

Explain and teach your children, at

God's economy is often the opposite of human's economy.

an age-appropriate level, about God's Word and what activities you will do as a family during this crisis time, e.g., what will each member of the family sacrifice for the good of the whole family.

- 10 **Trust in God's promises.** (Psalm 28:7; Proverbs 35, 6; Romans 15:13; Hebrews 13:8)

John Piper once said, “You must cultivate and preserve a confidence in God when you are not in a crisis. If we wait until a crisis comes then we won't have the resources or the depth necessary to maintain our faith well.”² If your faith has no depth, you will struggle and want to rely on your own understanding and power. Focus on growing in this area each and every day.

- 11 **Praise God in the storm.** (Psalm 9:9; 22:3; 59:16; 107:13)

It's easy to praise God when things are going well. Choosing to worship God through a crisis can be a challenge, but the truth is that God is also present in our pain, our suffering and our times of darkness. When you praise God, you acknowledge He is sovereign, faithful, and merciful, among many other things. Praise gets our focus off ourselves and back on God. It also invites His presence as He dwells close to us when we praise Him.

- 12 **Focus on the eternal, not the temporary.** (John 6:27; 16:25–33; Colossians 3:1, 2)

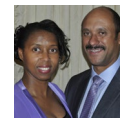
When you are focused on the eternal, you are focused on the unchanging character of God. You are storing up treasures in heaven. You are focused on the Bread of Life. All

else is fleeting and fails. For some of us, this means limiting our exposure to social media and TV, which increases anxiety and worry, and increasing our time in the Bible, which brings us peace.

- 13 **Pray.** (Psalm 65:2; 66:19; Romans 12:12; Hebrews 13:21)

God's Word calls us to pray. Jesus prayed regularly. Prayer is saying that, apart from Christ, we can do nothing. Prayer keeps us humble before God. Prayer is an expression of faith in God's power. Prayer is something that God uses to equip us and change our hearts. Prayer draws us closer to God and is a reminder that confidence in God trumps fear, thankfulness trumps selfishness, and understanding His love for us unleashes our love for others.

In these uncertain times, many people fear an economic collapse. If that's your fear, what type of goals do you set to avoid an economic collapse in your personal situation? Perhaps you invest in gold, buy a farm in the country, or stock up on food. Before proceeding, however, your question should be: God, what would You have me do with my resources? The goals might be entirely different, or they might be the same. However, the basis for setting them is a critical issue. If the goal comes from God and His Word, then it's a faith goal. But if it comes from our own fear or panic, and we just assume it's the right thing to do, then it's a mistake.



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² John Piper, “How Can I Have Faith in Times of Crisis?,” November 28, 2007, <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/how-can-i-have-faith-in-times-of-crisis>.

TRANSPARENCY & ACCOUNTABILITY

DELBERT PEARMAN

Therefore, since through God's mercy, we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God" (2 Corinthians 4:1, 2).

In the above passage of scripture, the apostle Paul advances the notion that it is both the duty and privilege of pastors and local church officers to perform their ministries transparently so that everyone to whom they are accountable may understand the teachings of God. This not only applies to presenting the Word of God, but also to handling His financial resources.

The importance of transparency and accountability in business is seen as "an accessible first step for leaders to take to build trust."¹ If these qualities are seen as necessary in secular organizations, how much more important are they in the Adventist churches which collectively receive approximately US \$3.2 billion annually in tithes and offerings?²

"Transparency," as used in science, engineering, business, the humanities, and other social contexts, is operating so that it is easy for others to see what actions are performed. Gaventa and McGee (2013) define it as having access to information.³ However, transparency does not automatically produce accountability.

"Accountability" is the fact or condition of being accountable; responsibility. It is about being responsible to someone or a group for actions taken; about being able to explain, clarify, and justify actions taken.

Organizations that openly share information with stakeholders foster a culture of trust, communication, and social responsibility. Even in handling confidential matters, there needs to be transparency as to why certain information is restricted. If secular organizations benefit from exercising openness and accountability, how much more would the local Adventist church?

In a study conducted by Petr Cincala, Rene Drumm, and Duane McBride (2016) on behalf of the General Conference Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research (ASTR) and the North American Division, 872 North American church members were surveyed regarding their giving patterns to World

In Financial Stewardship of the Local Church



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Mission. The first reason cited as a barrier to giving was "a growing distrust, or lack of understanding, regarding how funds are managed." Other reasons were "a preference for local giving, a perceived shortage of communication regarding missions, and a lack of personal funds." As unfavorable as the responses might seem, the study participants went on to state that "learning specifics about where their money is going" would help to increase transparency.⁴

Below are some concepts I have discovered in the book of Matthew that help establish transparency and accountability:

- 1 Setting a personal example by supporting the local church with my tithes and offerings and staying out of personal debt provide good examples for members to follow. "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:14-16).⁵ Also, see page 137 of the Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual (2015).
- 2 Upholding God's love and sacrifice before the people and then presenting the church's needs as opportunities to express their love and gratitude in return (Rees 1995).⁶ "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21, NIV).
- 3 Safeguarding the church's resources by investing wisely and spending carefully builds confidence in the members that

the money is being cared for. “Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on the house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock” (Matthew 7:24, 25).

- 4 Promoting faithful stewardship keeps the importance of personal faithfulness alive in the members’ minds. A key point to stress is that “spiritual prosperity is closely bound up with Christian liberality.”⁷ Matthew 7:7, 8 says: “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; and the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.”
- 5 Reporting the church’s financial position timely, clearly, and completely instills confidence in the members. Holding regular church business meetings where the treasurer presents the church’s financial status and allows for feedback from the members is a good method of keeping the church informed. Promptly issuing receipts to members for their contributions is another way. An excellent way to share with the local church how their contributions are used globally is by sharing the Adventist Mission videos available at www.adventistmission.org, and the Adventist World Radio reports available at <https://awr.org/videos>, just to name a couple that I have found informative. “A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. . . . Therefore by their fruits you will know them” (Matthew 7:18–20).
- 6 Conducting regular financial, membership, and operational compliance audits ensure the members that the reports presented are truthful. “But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.” (Matthew 5:37). Also, see page 141 of the Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual (2015).
- 7 Achieving goals and objectives on time, according to plan, and within budget inspires the members to give again. Most people are attracted to supporting successful ventures. “I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you” (Matthew 17:20).

The points stated above are practical ways I have found to show transparency to the members and be accountable to God and those over me. However, initiating various approaches to promote transparency and accountability alone does measure the degree to which transparency and accountability are perceived. Below are techniques that can be used to measure that:

- 1 Evaluate the changes in member contributions qualitatively since transparency and accountability positively correlate to trust (Penn 2017).⁸ People will contribute to programs they

have confidence in. “They first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God” (2 Corinthians 8:5).

- 2 Conduct a quantitative survey of the members to assess their attitudes to giving following the launch of a drive to foster transparency and accountability. “Test the spirits, whether they are of God” (1 John 4:1).
- 3 Set giving goals, and track their progress. Make changes as necessary. “But others [seeds] fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty” (Matthew 13:8).

When God said, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16), He was calling upon us to be transparent and accountable in:

- 1 the frequency of our activities (“Let your light so shine before men,” all humanity);
- 2 the quality of our activities (“That they may see your good works”);
- 3 the impact of our activities (“Glorify your Father in heaven”).

The bottom line is that if we want our members to grow more spiritual, we must create more transparency and accountability by sharing lots of important information with them proactively, ensuring that it is understood, and allowing them to provide feedback. Only when they feel part of the church’s progress will they support it more heartily.



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¹ Catherine Ellwood. “Building Trust through Transparency,” The Myers-Briggs Company, March 25, 2020. www.themyersbriggs.com/en-US/Connect-with-us/Blog/2020/March/Trust-and-Transparency.

² Archives, Statistics, and Research. Annual Statistical Report, vol. 2 (Silver Spring, MD: Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research), <https://documents.adventistarchives.org/Statistics/ASR/ASR2020A.pdf>.

³ John Gaventa and Rosemary McGee, “The Impact of Transparency and Accountability Initiatives,” *Development Policy Review* 31 (2013): 3–28.

⁴ Archives, Statistics, and Research. “Barriers to Giving,” Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research, Sept. 18, 2018, <https://www.adventistresearch.info/barriers-giving/>.

⁵ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

⁶ Mel Rees, *Biblical Principles for Living and Giving* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1995).

⁷ Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Stewardship* (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1940), 49.

⁸ Christopher S. Penn, “Transparency is the Currency of Trust,” *Awaken Your Superhero*, October 5, 2017, <https://www.christopherspenn.com/2017/10/transparency-is-the-currency-of-a-trust-relationship/>.



5 REASONS

FOR MISSIONAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

JESSE ZWIKER

LET ME ASK YOU A PERSONAL QUESTION

How many hours did you invest in sharing the gospel last month? Did you join your pastor on Sabbath afternoon to pass out tracts? During your last flight, were you able to share your faith with the person sitting next to you?

Someone once told me: “The main disadvantage that God has is that the devil has full-time workers, while God has free-time volunteers.” Think about it. Ninety-nine percent of us are not working full time for God. We have “secular” jobs. And we can’t be blamed. We have honorable responsibilities, like paying bills and sending our kids to school. So, we end up cramming all outreach activities into a very tight space which we call “free time”—after work, family, friends, and hobbies. But if we think we will finish the work in our free time, we must think again.

IS THERE A BETTER WAY?

There is a more effective way to advance God’s work, a way that combines our missional passion with our profession. It’s not tithe-based, it’s income-based. It allows us to work 40 hours per week, reaching people as part of our job, while generating enough money to pay

the bills. We call that missional entrepreneurship. Missional entrepreneurship means combining your talents with your calling to reach people and make it financially sustainable (just like Paul, the tent maker). Let me give you five powerful reasons why you should consider missional entrepreneurship.

First, it involves every talent. Every work we do is sacred. We all have beautiful talents that God wants us to use. Pastors aren’t the only ones with a spiritual calling, even though Middle Age-theology made us believe that for over a thousand years. Martin Luther emphasized that the Bible promotes the priesthood of all believers, not just the clergy. Designers, accountants, construction workers, teachers, chefs, engineers—we are all priests and have the privilege of serving God and others with our talents!

Secondly, it’s who we are. If you look back in Adventist history, you realize that our movement has always had a very strong missional and entrepreneurial spirit. William Miller had a farming business. Joshua Himes had an advertising company and became the marketing genius behind the early Advent movement. Uriah Smith invented a prosthetic leg. John Kellogg revolutionized the

American breakfast and invented much of the gym equipment still used today. Ferdinand Stahl started a clinic and 46 missionary schools in Peru. Dr. Harry Miller established 20 hospitals throughout China. The list goes on. Missional entrepreneurship has always been part of our history.

Thirdly, it’s prophetic. Ellen White was very passionate about missional entrepreneurship and combining faith and business. She wrote: “You have felt that business is business, religion is religion, but I tell you that these cannot be divorced. . . . You are not to put asunder that which God has joined—business and religion.”¹ Entire books were compiled on certain business models, such as *The Health Food Ministry*, which calls us to have vegetarian restaurants in every city of the world. *Counsels on Health and Medical Ministry* focuses on health-related businesses like hospitals, sanitariums, treatment rooms, and clinics. Then there is *Colporteur Ministry*, which talks about training students in sales to help fund their tuition while doing evangelism with the books they sell. Ellen White also wrote about how we should reach the cities by building a “beehive” network of missional ventures that would involve all church members:

A More Efficient Way to Advance God’s Work

Many lines of Christian effort have been carried forward. . . . These included visiting the sick and destitute, finding homes for orphans, and work for the unemployed; nursing the sick, and teaching the truth from house to house; the distribution of literature, and . . . classes on healthful living and the care of the sick. A school for the children has been conducted in the basement of the Laguna Street meeting-house. For a time a working men's home and medical mission was maintained. On Market Street, near the city hall, there were treatment rooms, operated as a branch of the St. Helena Sanitarium. In the same locality was a health food store. Nearer the center of the city, not far from the Call building, was . . . a vegetarian cafe, which was open six days in the week, and entirely closed on the Sabbath.²

This self-sustainable, “all-inclusive” beehive model of reaching the cities plays a prophetic role in the final outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the proclamation of the three angels’ messages.

Fourthly, missional entrepreneurship fulfills a massive demand. A recent survey from the University of Phoenix showed that 63 percent of young people below the age of 30 want to start their own businesses.³ Many others would take a pay cut if they could only find a job that merges their passion with their profession. Missional entrepreneurship has a great future if we embrace it and provide a framework that allows our young adults to combine their missional passion with their profession.

Fifthly, it is scalable. Thousands of Adventist ministries and businesses out there are existing, but they are barely surviving. A lack of proper business development knowledge keeps them away from expanding. But God’s message to us has been very clear. When Ellen White wrote about the successful beehive model in San Francisco in 1900, she made it clear that they needed to expand and open new restaurants, food stores, and treatment rooms.⁴ One year later, she said we can’t be satisfied with just one single restaurant in Brooklyn! Many more should follow.⁵ Long before a franchise was a

thing, even 40 years before the largest fast-food chain first opened its doors, this visionary woman urged us to use this business structure to reach the world! How did we end up neglecting this important method? How did that fast-food company manage to open approximately 36,889 restaurants, while we’re still struggling with a few hundred? This ought not be. God called us to be the head, not the tail. He has given you every tool and talent we need to finish His work, so let us use missional entrepreneurship to scale and complete it!

This isn’t just talking. We are doing something about this. I would like to share two great resources with you. If you want to learn more about how wholistic stewardship and missional entrepreneurship go hand in hand, listen to Pastor Marcos Bomfim’s recent podcast episode called “Learning to Live Dangerously.” Also, you might want to discover powerful videos and worksheets that will help you on your journey to becoming a missional entrepreneur. Hyve, Adventism’s community of missional entrepreneurs, and aspiring ones, invites you to join the movement at hyveinternational.org.



Jesse Zwiker, born in Switzerland, started his career as a missionary in Honduras at the age of 19 co-founding VIDA International. There, he recognized the power of entrepreneurship in the context of ministry and then went on to found several ventures in the for-profit and non-profit sector, including Crosslingo. He is the president of Hyve, a global Adventist community of missional entrepreneurs, where he shares his passion for combining faith and entrepreneurship. He lives in Chattanooga, USA together with his beautiful wife and two children.

¹ Ellen G. White, Manuscript Releases, vol. 19 (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1990), 17.

² Ellen G. White, “Note of Travel—No. 3: The Judgement of God on Our Cities,” *The Review and Herald*, July 5, 1906, 7–9.

³ Minda Zetlin, “Survey: 63% of 20-Somethings Want to Start a Business,” *Inc.*, December 17, 2013, <https://www.inc.com/minda-zetlin/63-percent-of-20-somethings-want-to-own-a-business.html>.

⁴ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1902), 110.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 55.



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THE MODEL STEWARD CANVAS

“A business as mission is one that sees itself as a vehicle to be used by God in the marketplace.” –Alex Cook¹

INTERVIEW WITH DR. KEN LONG

The concept of having a business with a heavenly purpose is, for many Christians, an uncommon combination. However, Ken Long, PhD, in his latest book, *The Model Steward Canvas*, empowers the readers through an innovative concept. His objective is to inspire entrepreneurs to start businesses with a kingdom purpose. As a foretaste to the reading of his book, we share with you the interview below.

Dynamic Steward: The title of the book has the uncommon yet thought-provoking combination of the words “business” and “kingdom purpose.” What is the concept behind the philosophy of the book’s title, as well as “business as mission?”

Ken Long: In 2019, I was involved in running a two-day workshop for businesspeople in Papua New Guinea on the theme “Stewardship, Discipleship, and Business Principles.” The attendees were quite surprised about the combination of business and church together, as people believed that they should be separate or that church administration looked down on businesspeople. We reassured them that God wants businesspeople to work together with the church, as we are



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all stewards. God created us with the express purpose of being His stewards, as mentioned in Genesis 1:26. We must be faithful stewards of everything God has given to us, and we must use His blessings God’s way, for His glory.

The concept of “business as mission” is a business operated according to biblical principles and values, by a Christian entrepreneur who aims to be a profitable business which brings glory to God and has a kingdom impact. Moreover, it is intentional about its kingdom purpose and impact on its staff, customers, suppliers, and the community. The focus

of the business is on the 4 P’s of the quadruple bottom line—People, Planet, Profit and God’s Purpose. Additionally, to stretch the business to the mission idea, it is when a significant part of the profits from the business are invested in God’s kingdom and charitable purposes.

DS: Which mindset should an entrepreneur adopt as he/she starts a business?

KL: God has given us everything that we need, and we must use these blessings for His glory. Like Abraham, we are “blessed to be a blessing.” When we have this mindset, we embrace the idea

of starting a business with a kingdom purpose, or as mentioned previously, a “business as mission.” The entrepreneur should be intentional about setting up and running a business based on Christian values. In the book, I relate the incredible story of my friend Lorraine and her late husband, Norm, who dedicated their business to God. They couldn’t borrow any money because Norm was bankrupt, but with his faith, a miracle began. Sales started to pour in, and over time the business became profitable, as “God never stopped working that business.”

I believe that by accepting God as your partner, no limit can be placed on what can be achieved. When you go into partnership with God, you’ve got a partner closer and more active than any human, and God can make a big impact on your business. God gives us gifts, talents, and blessings so that we can bring glory to His name.

Ten years later, after a tragic car accident, Lorraine was left in a dilemma. She didn’t know how to run the business by herself. She made a private deal with God: If God decided to help her, she was willing to give all the profits to support God’s kingdom. Sales kept increasing, and the profits kept going up. She testified, “I only survived in business because I totally depended on God, as many of the problems were far greater than I had the answers for.” As a Christian entrepreneur, choose God as your partner, remain faithful to Him, and your business will prosper. Then these blessings can be used to help different people in various places.

DS: How can one start a partnership with God?

KL: Firstly, we should recognize that we are stewards. Furthermore, in my book, I talk about the tension between the “freedom of independence” and God’s way, the “freedom of dependence.” So basically, the world is focused on the freedom of independence, and we work approximately 90,000 hours to accumu-

late money and gain our freedom from others. However, the concept brought forward by God encourages us to embrace a different perspective. God offers the freedom of dependence as an alternative. In our partnership with Him, if we put God and His kingdom first in our lives, all the necessities of life will be provided. So, giving is an act of trust. It doesn’t take much faith to give God whatever money is left after we’ve paid for everything else, but it does take faith to give money off

*We must be
faithful stewards of
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for His glory.*

the top. In my book *The Giving Equation*, the fact of giving to God is often a synonym of less money, which resonates with less life. But the truth is that giving to God is more abundant life. In God’s economy, you give, and you get more. “Give, and it will be given to you” (Luke 6:38).² You give away your life, but God gives you back more life with bonuses and blessings.

DS: What happens if things do not go the way they planned it?

KL: If there’s one thing you should remember, it is that God is your companion. “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding” (Proverbs 3:5) reminds us that even though the outcome may not be our expectation, God is in control. If you have faith in God and you’re fulfilling God’s purpose, then you can go ahead with confidence. Even though things do not work out the way you want them to,

they work out the way God wants them to. The business world can be tough, but confidence in God makes life a lot simpler, and trusting in Him reduces our worries.

DS: There are several tools that are shared in this book. Among them, the concept of “segmentation” is mentioned. How does it impact one’s business?

KL: When I start a business, the reality is that I cannot reach everybody. Therefore, I must try and reach customers within specific segments of the market. Understanding your market allows you to deliver products or services more specific to their needs.

DS: To conclude, which part of the book resonates the most with you?

KL: The Model Steward Canvas provides a simple plan on a page framework for how to set up your business. Moreover, it is intentionally having a kingdom purpose business, and it depends on how you operate the business, how you treat the staff, the customers, the suppliers, and the community. I also like this quote: “Teach a man how to establish a fishing business, and you not only feed him for a lifetime but bring benefits to his family, the community, and church.” So, the idea is that if you can help a person to start a business, they will be more self-sufficient. They can make more money for themselves, their family, and their community; have a better lifestyle; and, finally, invest in God’s kingdom.



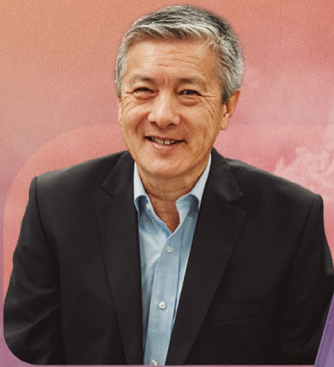
Emmelyne Virassamy, Emmelyne Virassamy, originally from Mauritius, is a graduate in BA Communication-Media at the University of Helderberg and currently serves as a Digital Content Creator for the Stewardship Ministries Department of the General Conference of SDA. She is passionate about this field and aspires to serve God through the media to win souls for Christ.

¹ Alex Cook, “Business—The Not So New Mission Field,” *Wealth with Purpose*, August 23, 2016, <https://wealthwithpurpose.com/investment/business-not-new-mission-field/>.

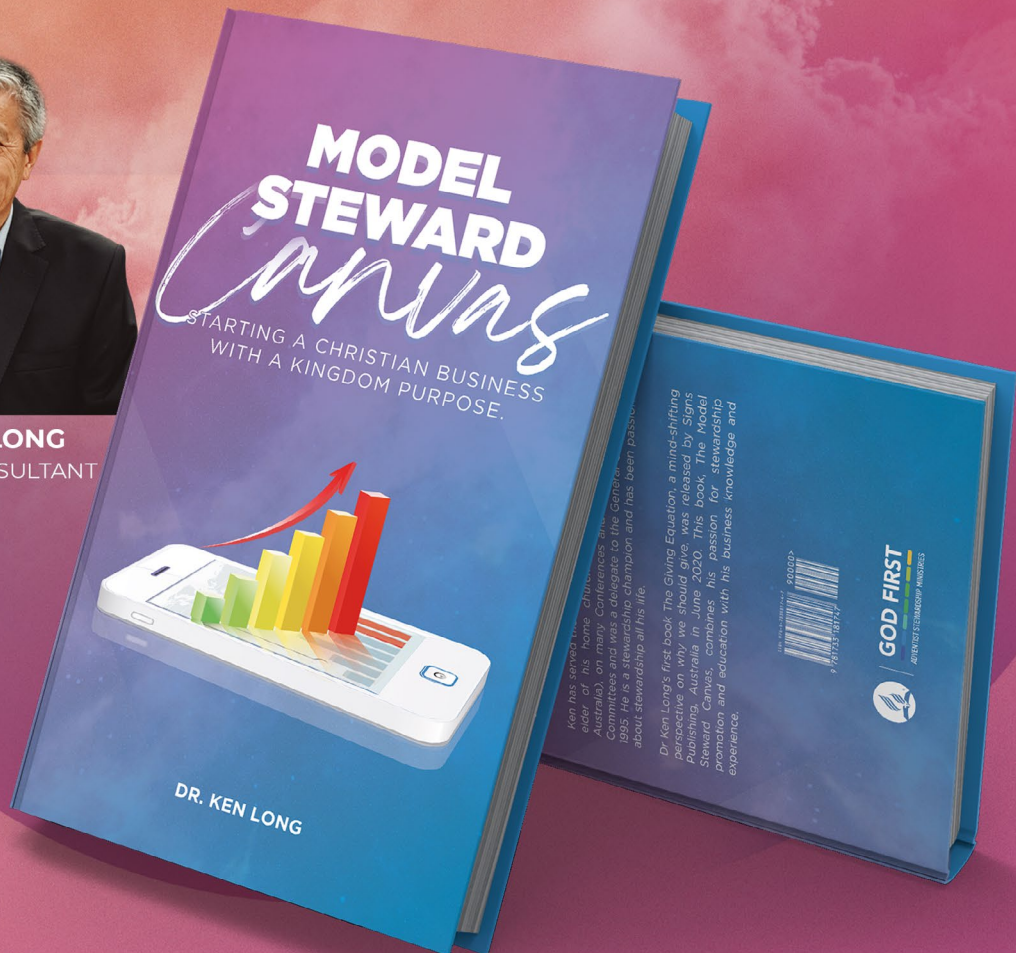
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DR. KEN LONG
BUSINESS CONSULTANT



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