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## THAT SPECIAL ORANGE TREE

"I didn't learn to tithe in the baptismal class," says Angelo Donaldo, an Angolan Adventist pastor. He explained that in 1977, his father was an Adventist pastor in Luau, at the border of the Democratic Republic of Congo, 1,580 km (981 miles) from Luanda, the capital of the country. "Even though I was very young," says Angelo, "I can remember very well how around our home there were ten orange trees."

"My seven siblings and I could freely eat from nine of them, but on the tenth, the most fruitful of all, we were not allowed to touch, because my father would bring all the produce to the church as the tithe," Angelo recalls. "Sometimes, my father would even hide himself all the night near the tree to prevent thieves from ravaging its produce," says Angelo. "Today, I feel myself blessed by my father's faithful life," testifies the pastor, because his example influenced some of his spiritual choices. "I believe that my father's coherent life is one of the reasons why all his children, except one, are now faithful church members," he ponders. "It was at home, not at the church, that I learned to respect God and to tithe," he says.

Like Angelo's father, our Heavenly Father also gave all the trees of the garden to Adam and Eve, except one, which He reserved to Himself. Had they respected His command, our first parents would only be expressing gratitude for all that they had received, but they would have also recognized God's authority and ownership over the garden and their lives. And the same happens today as we tithe.

Commenting about Solomon's suggestion to "honor the Lord with your possessions, and with the firstfruits of all your increase (Prov. 3:9)," and the resulting blessings (v. 10), Ellen G. White says: "This scripture teaches that God, as the Giver of all our benefits, [1] has a claim upon them all; that [2] His claim should be our first consideration; and that [3] a special blessing would attend all who honor this claim (*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 65)."

**APPEAL:** Let us recognize God's authority, dominion and goodness, as we worship Him with our tithe and offerings now!

**PRAYER:** Take what is Yours, our dear Creator and Redeemer! Amen!