

Elder's Digest

A Quarterly Resource for Local Church Elders

Number Five

1995 No. 3

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STEWARDSHIP

Your Hand
in
God's Hand



*A Word of Gratitude
from the Ministerial Association*



Dear Elders of the World Church,

I bring warm and heartfelt greetings and gratitude to each of you throughout this globe as we meet for this session of the General Conference in Utrecht, Holland. The past five years have been challenging ones for the church as we stepped boldly into the 1990s. The Lord has blessed the remnant church in its strong emphasis on growth and evangelism. During this time the church has grown in number and strength from 6.5 million to over 8 million in 1995. This is the largest growth in a five-year period during our 150-year history.

Much of the recognition for this growth extends to each of you who have toiled diligently and faithfully for the Lord's cause in your local congregations. God has indeed provided for you the strength and wisdom that you required for this sacred duty. Yours has been a work that has nurtured local members, strengthening them in their faith and in their relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ. As you go about your ministry may you continually praise and humbly submit yourself to Him who is worthy of glory and honor.

These years have also been demanding ones as the church continues to meet the challenges of a complex and changing world. Issues that threaten the doctrinal integrity of the church and the gospel of Jesus Christ have witnessed increased intensity. I invite each of you to work closely with your pastors. Unite with them in their efforts so that the work of salvation may be carried forward in a mighty and resounding way.

Continue your close communication with your Savior. Be sustained in His Word and in His promises. Study His Word of truth that you may be strengthened spiritually and be reaffirmed in your loyalty to the doctrinal message of the Seventh-day Adventist church. This message is so vital to the further growth and ministry of our church in the world today. The Lord will bear you up in your labor as a vital servant working in unity and humility to hasten the soon coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

We thank you and continue to pray with you toward this great hope that soon will become a living reality.

Sincerely,

Joel Sarli

Joel Sarli
Editor, *Elder's Digest*



Elder's Digest

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Elders—Stewards of God's Flock

Joel Sarli



In this issue we focus on the true meaning of Christian stewardship. Because people tend to look to their leaders as examples, it's appropriate to look into how the function of an elder is a very real opportunity to model the biblical principles of stewardship.

The *Random House Unabridged Dictionary* defines a steward as "A person who manages another's property. . . ; one who administers anything as agent of another. . . ."

This definition simply states the responsibility that elders have over the congregation of God's people. Elders must labor among God's flock as stewards. They do not own the flock, but labor for and give account to the One who does. (Heb. 13:17; Titus 1:7). Elders need to be recognized by God's people, but their eyes must be fixed on the Chief Steward to whom ultimately they have to be accountable.

In their book *The Elders Handbook: A Practical Guide for Church Leaders* page 207, Gerard Berghoef and Lester DeKoster state that an elder "is not responsible to the congregation as a politician is to his constituency. The elders have authority from God, not the congregation. To God's will as revealed in His Word, the eldership is alone responsible."

Elders cannot lead without the respect and submission of God's people (Heb.13:17). A congregation should not resist the leadership that God has appointed, that the congregation has recognized, and that models Bible-directed leadership. An elder is not to "rule over" a congregation, but as steward, administrate and lead it for God. In making decisions, elders are not to follow their own inclinations, but as stewards, they are bound to follow the Word of God.

Work and labor for the good of others describe the function of an elder who accepts responsibility as a steward for the Lord (1 Tim. 3:2; 5:17). To look out for others and not one's self is the elder's primary function (Acts 20:28).

To have a healthy congregation, elders as true stewards, must pour their energy into the priorities that Jesus has set. This true concept of stewardship must be present in the spirit of every member of a congregation and of every person chosen to exercise eldership among God's flock.

Programs come and go, but for a true steward the priorities of Christ for the Church do not change: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen" (Matt 28:19-20, NIV).



Elder's Digest

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The Importance of Young Elders in the Church

by Michael G. Hasel

It was a bright Sabbath morning. The sun rose majestically over the mountains and cast its rays across the city. A young couple in their late twenties made their way to church to participate in the worship service, and what an appropriate day for worshiping the Creator it was. Communion service was to be held that day along with the ordination of new elders in the church. It was a calling that was taken with grave responsibility, for the young man was to be one of the elders ordained that morning. With reverence he sat in the front of the church awaiting the time of ordination. He prayed for the Lord's strength and for His wisdom as he contemplated the many responsibilities that such an office held. The ordination took place and immediately he was asked to assist the pastor of the church in the communion service. After the service was over, he stood outside the sanctuary and spoke with church members as they were leaving. Many were positive and encouraging, but not a few would make other remarks, such as, "Well, kind of young, but I suppose you will do." A newly baptized church member just a few years older than he remarked, "Aren't you too young to be an Elder? You are younger than I am!" The newly ordained elder, not knowing what to say, simply chuckled and attempted a kind reply. Yet it bothered him and he concentrated to study God's Word concerning this issue.

Perhaps you have met with similar situations in your own experience, or at times may have won-

dered, can relatively young individuals be called to positions of local elder in the church? What does the Bible say about young leaders in the church? What does it say specifically concerning elders? Is not an elder just that, someone who is older?

THE ELDER IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

There are several terms used for "elder" in the New Testament. Each has a slightly different function and meaning and must be studied in context. The Jews often referred to their own elders which were called *presbuteros*, "an individual person older of two, or the men of old, our ancestors" (Luke 15:25; 1 Peter 5:5).¹ This term was also used to denote the members of local councils (Luke 7:3) or members of a group among the Sanhedrin (Matt. 16:21; 26:3; Mark 8:31; 11:27; 14:43, 53; 15:1; Luke 9:22; 20:1). Elders of the Christian church were called by this name as well (Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5-9).

These elders were also referred to as bishops. In this case, the Greek terms *episkopos* and *episkop* can also mean "overseer, superintendent, or guardian" and refer to a person who has "a definite function or fixed office within a group" (the Church).² Thus Paul makes a distinction in some passages between the Greek terms and uses a term that is not limited in meaning to age.

Both terms (*episkopos* and *episkop*) are used in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 where the fourteen specific qualifications of the elder are given. Age is also not listed among the fourteen requirements of an elder or bishop

**As a young elder
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(see 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). In his letter to Titus, however, both *presbutas* and *episkopon* are used interchangeably in describing the characteristics that such a person should hold. This is also true in Acts 20:17, 28 where both terms are used again. Why use two terms then? It has been suggested that both words designate the same activity with different extended meanings. The word *presbuteros* refers to the *title* of the office which implies a position of respect. On the other hand, *episkopos* or *episkop* is used to name the *function* of the office.³ It seems clear then that while the position is one that demands respect the function of the office itself does not necessarily require a certain chronological age.

It is also made clear from several of the qualifications that the elder must be a spiritually mature individual. An elder is not to be “a new convert, lest he become conceited and fall into the condemnation of the devil” (1 Tim. 3:6). Likewise, the elder must “be above reproach” (1 Tim. 3:2) and “have a good reputation with those outside *the church* (1 Tim. 3:7). Here spiritual integrity and maturity are emphasized as qualities of the elder.

YOUNG LEADERS CHOSEN BY GOD

Young leaders have been important in the Lord’s work throughout history. In the Old Testament it was Samuel who was called by God at an early age (1 Sam. 3:10-19). David was anointed king by Samuel while he was still a young man herding sheep. He was the youngest of his brothers. Other young rulers in Israel followed including such reformers as Hezekiah and Josiah (2 Kings 18, 22, and 23). Paul writes to young Timothy in the New Testament giving him wise counsel in his dealings as a pastor among his church members (1 Tim. 5).

THE WORK OF YOUNG ELDERS IN THE CHURCH

Young elders, humble and dedicated to the Lord, are needed today in our churches. As a young elder you can bring a new sense of urgency and a vibrant energy to the leadership of the church. You can provide a fresh perspective which, together with humble prayer and study, may bring important growth and generate new hope in the church. There are several counsels that could apply to the young elder in the church.

Do not take your calling and the responsibilities of an elder lightly. Remain close to the Lord in all your endeavors. Keep faithful your devotional time daily with Him and spend much time in Bible study and prayer. As an elder you must be “able to teach” (1 Tim. 3:2) which means that you must remain knowledgeable in

spiritual matters and stay in close tune with the Scriptures.

Be Christlike in your dealings with others. Always be loving and kind toward your fellow member. Paul urged Timothy, a young pastor, “Do not sharply rebuke an older man, but rather appeal to him as a father, to the younger men as brothers, the old women as mothers, the younger women as sisters, in all purity” (1 Tim. 5:1-2). This applies to the younger elder as well. With a humble heart, learn from older, more experienced church members and if something is done which needs rebuke, speak to your pastor first and seek counsel concerning the matter. Continue to speak in love and in wisdom with that individual. Be slow to speak and quick to listen. With young women especially, be cautious (this concerns unmarried elders in particular) so that your actions may not be misinterpreted. This is what Paul means when he counsels “in all purity”.

As an elder you have a responsibility to maintain your reputation “with those outside the church” (1 Tim. 3:7) as well as those within. Be wise, therefore, in your actions. Always remember that people are watching you and you are a witness for the church no matter where you are.

There are tremendous ways in which you can benefit the church through your leadership. As a young person you have a connection with a large segment of the church which the older elders may no longer hold. Take advantage of these and work as the Lord guides you. A few suggestions would be:

1 Begin a Bible study group with young people in the church and meet sometime during the week. There are many areas that can be studied, but perhaps many of them have questions concerning issues which face them in their present life situation. Study from the Scriptures and develop solid principles concerning entertainment, dating, and some social issues that they may be interested in.

2 Plan to involve the young people in some social activities in addition to serious study time. Plan a Sabbath afternoon hike or perhaps go out on Saturday night and spend some time getting to know one another on a social level. Young people are looking for wholesome activities.

3 Get involved with Pathfinders and if your church does not have a Pathfinders club, contact your local conference to find out what is

required to start one. This is a tremendous opportunity and outreach for the youth of our churches.

4 As an elder and church leader you may wish to involve other young people in the church service. Discuss this with your pastor or church board. It gives church members encouragement and hope to see the youth involved in the service and makes the youth feel needed and important to the church. Appropriate ways in which they could be involved would be for special music, scripture reading, invocations or benedictions, and calling up the offering.

5 Just because you are young does not mean that you cannot minister to older and elderly church members. Schedule regular visitation time with church members. Become acquainted with them. Assess and address their needs. If there are those who are hospitalized or must remain at home due to illness be sure to visit with them.

6 As an elder in the church be encouraging to all members. Be friendly and go out of your way to greet them every Sabbath. Have a cheerful and willing attitude. If someone needs help do not hesitate to step in. If someone is missing who was to teach Sabbath School or participate

in the church service be ready to teach or participate in their place.

If God has called you as an elder He surely has a purpose for you in the church. As a young person do not hesitate, but pray and study for the Lord's will in your life. If God convicts you, step forward into the challenge that He presents to you for He has promised that He will guide you and give you strength. With so many of our youth drifting from our churches today, perhaps God has called you especially to minister to their needs. Study with them. Encourage them. As others see your work they may be encouraged and find new hope as well in the leadership of a younger generation. It may be through your work and example, as God gives you the strength and wisdom, that others may be nurtured and strengthened through Christ's redemptive power. **E**

Bible texts in this article are from the *New American Standard Bible*, © The Lockman Foundation 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977.

¹W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (4th edition. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1957), 706-707.

²Ibid., 299.

³*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 6 (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publ., 1980), 38.

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Warm Up Your Congregation with that Personal Touch

by Joel Sarli

*Sometimes small things bring about great results.
It doesn't cost much, just a little bit of dedication.
Read these suggestions, try them in your church
and see amazing things happen in your congregation.*

I am sick and tired of calling friends and hearing that cold and impersonal voice produced by that electronic secretary.

Some days ago I called my pastor. I needed to talk to him. The answer I got was "If you want to talk with your pastor, press one." I obeyed the order just to hear that computerized, cool voice saying, "Sorry, we are unable to answer your call. Please call later."

Today's electronic gadgetry is making us an ever-growing, cold and impersonal community. We have everything to give the impression that we care about one another. We print large banners and stick them in the front doors of our church buildings. We write nice poems and print them on colorful cards telling the visitors that we enjoy their presence and that we want them back, but just five minutes after the worship service is over the visitor can hardly find someone to get information about the program for the coming week. It seems that the members don't like to spend time together or don't have much in common.

Meanwhile, people are shouting for recognition and the isolationism is flourishing among all types of congregations and cultures in the entire world. As a church we have to face this problem or we too will be written off as just another impersonal institution.

Here are some suggestions that I would like to present to local church elders. You may say that they

are part of my culture. I don't mind. I used these suggestions in my congregations in Toronto, New York and Washington and they proved to be good. Try them, you might find them very helpful. Maybe they can change the shape of your congregation a little bit and bring some encouragement to a solitary soul in your church.

Learn people's names as you talk with them.

With very rare exceptions, people like to be called by their names. The use of the name creates a familiar environment for an easy-going conversation.

I remember once in a very informal meeting, Elder Neal C. Wilson called me by my name. I was surprised that this VIP who met me just once (and I was not a "big shot"), remembered my name. I couldn't hold my curiosity so I asked him. "How do you know my name?" He answered, "When I worked among the Arabs I learned that they would be offended if I didn't know their names during our conversations. So I decided to work on this area. It took hard work and a lot of discipline. But now it's natural for me to learn the names of people." Everyone needs some improvement in this area. It doesn't come as a natural gift.

When you meet a new person ask them to repeat their name. Don't make the mistake of pronouncing their name wrong. Write it down on a card and try to make some kind of association with their face. It may be that when you meet them again you won't remember their name

Simply ask for their forgiveness and try again until their name is in the file of your memory. From that point on when you meet them always use their



name and repeat the name several times in your conversation. This is a small avenue that will help you develop a personal relationship with people.

Greet people at the entrance and spend some time with them.

Nothing feels quite as good as to be genuinely greeted by someone with a warm smile, a firm handshake and a word of welcome.

In Toronto we trained greeters at each door whose ministry of greeting not only set the tone for what was going to happen that day, but started an important process of developing a continuing relationship.

Our goal is to make people feel part of the family of the church as quickly as possible and even for the people attending the church on a regular basis, there is nothing like being met at the door by someone who cares.

Spend time with people after the worship service.

Most of our members rush home as soon as the worship service is over and lose an excellent opportunity to share their Christian ideals with the visitors. I have discovered that many visitors would like to get more information about the church and talk to anyone available at this time. If they were attracted by what they heard and saw, for sure this would be a good opportunity to fan up that spark of interest.

Make your spouse aware of the importance of this aspect of your function as an elder and aware that you have something to do before going home.

Note the names and addresses of interested people.

Give the names to the pastor or call them during the days of the coming week reminding them of the programs at the church and inviting them to come again. This has proved to be a good source of Bible studies.

These little things will add to your ministry as an elder—that personal touch that characterized the very ministry of Jesus our Saviour. These little things can make a difference in your church. They can create a friendly environment in your church and the church will be more attractive to the visitors and your congregation will be a community where people can experience the meaning of true Christian friendship and fellowship. **E**

Joel Sarli is an Associate Secretary of the Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Seven Facts About The Bible

*"We search the world for truth; we cull
The good, the pure, the beautiful,
From graven stone and written scroll,
From all old flower-fields of the soul;
And, weary seekers of the best,
We come back laden from the quest,
To find that all the sages said
Is in the Book our mothers read."*

—John Greenleaf Whittier.

1. ITS AUTHORSHIP

Divinely inspired. 2 Timothy 3:16.
It is called "The Book of the Lord." Isaiah 34:16.
Human agencies were guided to write God's Word. 2 Peter 1:20, 21.
To be received by man as "the Word of God." 1 Thessalonians 2:13.

2. ITS UNITY

John 10:35. (Forty-four authors writing over sixteen centuries.)
The theme is Christ-centered. John 5:39.
Consistent arrangement:
OLD TESTAMENT
Luke 24:44.
Law (Genesis to Deuteronomy)
History (Joshua to Job)
Inspiration (Psalms to Song of Solomon)
Prophecy (Isaiah to Malachi)
NEW TESTAMENT
John 15:26, 27; 16:13.
Gospels (Matthew to John)
History (Acts)
Inspiration (Romans to Jude)
Prophecy (Revelation)

3. ITS TRUSTWORTHINESS

Veracity to be investigated. 1 Thessalonians 5:21; Luke 12:57; Acts 17:11.
a. Historically accurate: established by the witness of archaeology.
b. Prophecies fulfilled: concerning nations—e.g., Babylon. Isaiah 13:19-22.
Concerning Christ—over 300 prophecies.

4. ITS INDESTRUCTIBILITY

Jesus' testimony. John 10:35; Luke 16:17.
Eternal in duration. Isaiah 40:8; 1 Peter 1:23.

5. ITS LANGUAGE

The Old Testament written in Hebrew—except some passages in Daniel, Ezra and Jeremiah, which are in Aramaic.
New Testament written in colloquial Greek of the first century.

6. ITS POWER. Hebrews 4:12.

To save. Romans 1:16.
To strengthen. Acts 20:32.

7. ITS BENEFITS

Reveals a loving heavenly Friend. Proverbs 18:24; Jeremiah 31:3.
Imparts guidance and strength. Psalm 32:8; 119:105, 130; Deuteronomy 33:25.
Provides for every human need in numberless promises. Philippians 4:16.
Gives hope for the future. John 14:1-3; Romans 15:2; 1 Peter 1:3.

Rex D. Edwards, D. Min., is the director for continuing education of the General Conference Ministerial Association, Silver Spring, Maryland.



A Children's Corner in Every Sermon

by Wesley Amundsen

There is a big difference between having “a children’s corner *in every sermon*” and telling a children’s story *before* the sermon. Sermons are not intended to be story hours for children. At the same time they are not to be so dry, so heavy and ponderous, so formal and lifeless, that the children receive no benefit from them. It is the *sermon* that the minister preaches to his congregation that is to contain interesting thoughts for the children. The wise man has said, “to every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven” (Eccl. 3:1, KJV).

“At every suitable opportunity let the story of Jesus’ love be repeated to the children. *In every sermon let a little corner be left for their benefit. The servant of Christ may make lasting friends of these little ones. Then let him lose no opportunity of helping them to become more intelligent in a knowledge of the Scriptures.*”—*Gospel Workers*, p. 208 (Italics mine.)

□ WHAT ABOUT THE PRESERMON STORY?

Telling a story to the children for five or ten minutes prior to the preaching of the sermon may be the method some preachers have to use in order that the children may be interested in coming to church. But what about the next half hour or thirty-five minutes during which the minister is speaking to the rest of the folks in the congregation? During those *long* minutes for John or Mary they must sit and wiggle or try to sleep or cut out paper dolls or do something else to pass the time away. Children should early become interested in listening to the sermon, watching for the points of interest that may open to them a vista into the spiritual things of God.

I am afraid that some of our presermon storytelling does not quite measure up to standards set by some of our more able workers for youth and children. In fact, some that we have listened to hardly belong in church, especially when after the story the minister is expecting to preach a sobering message to

the church. To have the children on the front benches laughing and enjoying an amusing story to the full or witnessing the clowning antics of a minister, is hardly the thing to prepare the way for sound doctrine. Surely a minister loses some of his power when he acts in this dual capacity before the congregation. We are not paid entertainers, but we are to be sober, serious men of God.

Surely Jesus loved children, and apparently they loved Him, for they sought to be in His presence. I wonder just what kind of stories Jesus told them. I am sure they were based upon solid, helpful foundations. His methods for reaching the hearts of His youthful audience were the same as those He used to reach the hearts of mature men and women. Common people heard Him gladly, as did the children, because He spoke so that all could understand.

□ THE BEST COMPLIMENT

One of the objectives that I have sought in my ministry is to be able to hold the attention of children, youth, and adults at the same time. It is difficult. But it *can* be done. Often it is done unconsciously. Some time ago a mother came to me and said, “Pastor Amundsen, my children like to hear you preach because you speak simply, and they can understand what you are talking about.” To me that was one of the best compliments I have ever received on my preaching. And I must hasten to add, I am not a great preacher. I am just an ordinary speaker, but I have sought to reach the minds of the common people during my ministry. If we can reach the minds of the rank and file of our members and also the minds of the children, we need have no fear but that we can also reach the minds and hearts of the intellectuals among us. To ancient Israel the instruction came regarding teaching the children:

“These words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when

thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up" (Deut. 6:6, 7, KJV).

When Jesus was only twelve years of age He was found in the temple talking to the scholarly priests of Israel, asking questions that all but confounded them. Whence came His understanding of these things? He had been taught diligently by Mary, His earthly parent.

Possibly one of the reasons why so many of our Seventh-day Adventist children are so unruly and so worldly is that as ministers we have sought to entertain them with stories. We have given them chaff instead of fine wheat.

I certainly believe in stories for children. We must, however, as ministers of the gospel seek to prepare and deliver our sermons in such a way that the

children will find their "corner" in the sermon itself. Sometimes they might be told at the beginning that the sermon was planned "for today" with the boys and girls in mind, and that you want them to "listen carefully all the way through." Then as we preach from Sabbath to Sabbath they will be watching for those places where their interest is aroused. The sermon will not be lengthy and dry for them, but they too will be interested in attending church services because they understand what the minister is saying. He speaks to them as well as to the adults. By all means let us have "a children's corner in every sermon." **E**

Wesley Amundsen was the president of Madison College in Madison, Tennessee, when this article was written.

A Quarterly Resource for Local Churches

Number two

Elder's Digest

MISSION STATEMENT



The *Elder's Digest* is an international journal for local church elders published quarterly by the Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

As the church experiences rapid growth around the world, increasingly heavy burdens of leadership rest upon local elders. This is particularly true in multi-church districts. The objective of the *Elder's Digest* is to help train and support local church elders as they attempt to fulfill the gospel commission by nurturing their members and reaching out to their communities. It will do this by:

1. Addressing the elder's spiritual, mental, physical, and social needs.
2. Reviewing the great Bible themes of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, showing how each one centers in the Lord Jesus.
3. Providing resources that will assist in giving strong administrative leadership in their congregations.
4. Giving assistance that will strengthen their preaching skills. This will include sample sermons in the journal.
5. Providing instruction that will assist in the nurture of believers and new interests.
6. Encouraging leadership and participation in evangelism on the part of the elders.
7. Providing materials that will assist elders in supporting the pastors they serve.
8. Maintaining a simple writing style in the journal (6th grade level of English) similar to the *Reader's Digest*.
9. Including articles from the Spirit of Prophecy relating to the areas listed above.

The *Elder's Digest* will be designed to meet the needs of all elders, but especially those serving in churches of 25 to 100 members in multi-church districts.

The *Elder's Digest* will join *Ministry* in being a prophetic voice calling the church to be faithful to the biblical principles that constitute Adventist truth, ideals, and values. It will encourage elders continually to grow stronger in Christ that they may model faith as they encourage spiritual development in the flocks they serve as undershepherds.

Is Money the Problem?

Keeping Church Finance Christian

by Mel Rees

Obtaining adequate financial support for the church's program is probably the major problem pastors face, rivaled only by that of finding sufficient volunteer personnel. In this month's article, Mel Rees says that church financial headaches most frequently are symptoms rather than the primary problems. Dealing with the four reasons members do not adequately support their churches offers the only real hope of a stable financial base.

The phone disturbed what might have been a beautiful dream. The caller was a friend of mine who evidently had forgotten he was in another time zone. I'll confess I appreciate telephone calls in inverse proportion to the lateness of the hour, but he sounded so cheerful I made an exception.

"We're going bankrupt," he laughed. I wondered if I was missing some of the pieces.

"Personally?"

"No, my church."

"Your church is going bankrupt?" I came wide awake with this one. I knew him to be a very successful pastor, and began to wonder if this was some sort of late-night joke—until he listed all the things he had tried in an unsuccessful effort to keep the church's program afloat. There was a long pause, then an audible sigh. "I've been a pastor for a long time, but this is the first time I have ever faced this situation. I called to see if you have an answer. I hope so, because we *are* going bankrupt."

It may seem inconceivable that a church would have to go out of business because of a lack of financial support. But it is possible. The question is Why would this happen?

One might understand such a crisis if the church had experienced a sudden loss of membership because of some unusual situation such as a lack of employment, but my friend was describing a church with an adequate membership in an area where eco-

nomic conditions were normal, or nearly so. He was concerned by the downward trend in the giving habits of members who had been staunch supporters of the program.

Before considering this dilemma, which today is not at all unusual, let's take a warning from the problem-solver's notebook: Most solutions are aimed at symptoms rather than problems. A problem, they say, is like an onion; one has to remove many layers before getting down to the crying part. Very possibly a lack of support for the church is only a symptom. And likely the situation recurs because the methods used to correct it treat the symptom rather than the problem. Possibly we should use some "onion techniques" and determine the real cause—even if it is a crying situation.

The evidence that we have been treating symptoms lies in the endless array of fund-raising schemes that have become standard in most churches. The financial problems faced by these churches confirm that such methods have produced temporary solutions. Is lack of money the church's real problem, or is it only a symptom?

A disturbing observation suggests that *a person will support anything he believes in, regardless of the cost*. If this is true, and if members are not supporting the church satisfactorily, they must not *really* believe in it or its mission. They may give lip service, and pride themselves in being members, but they have not

made a genuine heart (or pocketbook) commitment. Four reasons bear consideration.

First, the members may perceive the church as poorly managed. Lack of confidence often affects support. Second, they may find other things more appealing. Third, the church may have no aggressive program. And fourth, the priorities of church administration may have become clouded by the constant need for money. Let us consider these possibilities and their consequences.

IRRESPONSIBLE MANAGEMENT

Some church leaders have been guilty of managing church finances in a loose, irresponsible manner; either they do not have a budget or they do not operate within its limits. This open-ended type of management (one man referred to it as pouring sand down a well) spells financial disaster in capital letters, because no amount of income could satisfy it.

A budget does not produce income, but it certainly controls expenditures and makes wise use of available funds. Any successful business is conducted in a responsible way. The church is big business and should be managed as such.

Some church leaders have a habit of spending money for non-essential or nonproductive programs. This, of course, would have no effect on the nongiver and very little on the token giver. But it may seriously affect the hard core of church support. Traditionally these people are industrious, thrifty, careful managers of their personal finances and do not like to see money wasted or used in unproductive ways.

Often these people, who are really interested in the activity and outreach of the church, will voice their opposition to these wasteful or ineffective programs. If their concerns are ignored, they may withhold support as a means of protest. (Some people consider this the only way to get leadership's attention.) These people may be dismissed as negative or dissident, but the fact remains that their voice will be heard—audibly or through a lack of support.

Church leaders, of all people, should recognize

that all money belongs to God and should be managed in a way He would approve. Those who are in charge of the funds placed specifically in His treasury hold an even greater responsibility. This area must be thoroughly investigated whenever a downward trend in support appears. Mismanagement is not just a financial problem. It is a problem of Christian stewardship. A lack of support could be a blessing in disguise if it calls attention to irregularities in the use of the church's resources.

EXTERNAL APPEAL

Possibly the world outside the church, with its alluring prospects for fun, satisfaction, and security, appears more attractive than the rewards the church offers. This should cause concern, for material things rather than spiritual interests may claim the members' attention and support. The church certainly cannot compete with the world in entertainment or self-indulgence; attempts to do so only compound its problems.

Material interests have always drawn men and women into their net. This is not a modern trend—the prophet Ezekiel spoke of it in his day: “Man, your fellow-countrymen gather in groups and talk of you under walls and in doorways and say to one another, ‘Let us go and see

what message there is from the Lord.’ So my people will come crowding in, as a people do, and sit down in front of you. They will hear what you have to say, but they will not do it. ‘Fine words!’ they will say, but *their hearts are set on selfish gain*. You are no more to them than a singer of fine songs with a lovely voice, or a clever harpist; they will listen to what you say but will certainly not do it” (Eze. 33:30-32, N.E.B.).

Could it be possible that as ministers we have been guilty of entertaining people rather than convincing them of their need for a sin-pardoning Saviour? Have we been fearful of stepping on the toes of the selfish, the self-indulgent? Have we been guilty of resembling a “singer of fine songs,” or “a clever harpist,” rather than a voice of conscience calling for repentance?

Have we, in fact, neglected to hold before our

Any successful business is conducted in a responsible way. The church is big business and should be managed as such.

members' eyes the advantages of a Christ-centered life and the glories of eternity? Have they, as a result, become blinded by the glitter of earthly things—things that are temporary and unsatisfying? We should recall the words of the Master, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matt. 6:21, KJV). The reverse is also true. Where your heart is, there will your treasure be also.

NO AGGRESSIVE PROGRAM

This demands careful examination. One man expressed it this way: "I don't mind putting gas and oil in the car if it is going somewhere, but I don't want to waste my money idling in the driveway." A church cannot, must not, "idle." It will either move forward or backward. It either advances or retreats.

One of ancient Israel's greatest enemies was love of the status quo. After entering Canaan, they squatted in contentment. Joshua chided them, "How long are ye slack to go to possess the land, which the Lord God of your fathers hath given you?" (Joshua 18:3, KJV). Centuries passed; still they squatted. The prophet Amos cried out, "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion" (Amos 6:1, KJV).

Some modern churches are afflicted with this

same malady—referred to by some as "circular progress." This is a virulent form of collective selfishness in which a group spends all its energies and resources on itself. It thinks only of its own existence, comfort, and pleasure. It is a self-perpetuating mentality in which a church insulates itself from the world, becoming self-centered and exclusive. Its movement lies within its own circle. Its objectives are mainly cosmetic. G. MacDonald once said, "One thing is clear to me, that no indulgence of passion destroys the spiritual nature so much as respectable selfishness."

The corporate body must take its nourishment through unselfish service for others or it will eventually wither and die. Only by a constant, consistent exercise of disinterested benevolence can any church hope to grow—or even survive.

One of the most progressive church programs I have ever seen involved a small congregation with limited financial potential. The church stayed small because it spawned two other churches and "lost" its key leaders to these new offspring. The members were so involved with community outreach and local and foreign mission projects that they had no time for internal problems.

Here was a classic example of corporate respon-



Questions to Aid Your Diagnosis

If your church has a financial problem, consider these questions.

- ❖ Does your church have a working budget based on an accurate estimate of the church's potential?
- ❖ Are you following this budget?
- ❖ To whom are those in charge of church funds accountable?
- ❖ Do the members have access to regular, accurate financial reports?
- ❖ Is there a democratic voice in the planning and execution of the church program?
- ❖ Is there a pattern of spending money for things that are nonproductive, wasteful, or unnecessary?
- ❖ Is faithful stewardship regularly emphasized? How?
- ❖ Are you placing special emphasis on eternal versus material values? How?
- ❖ Does your church have an aggressive outreach program to its community? To the world?
- ❖ When considering some objective, do you emphasize only the program, or do you include the members' need to give?
- ❖ Is the spiritual welfare of the members your church's first priority—or are they considered solely as a base of support?

sibility and personal and group dedication. This church was what every church should be: a viable, growing concern—demanding and receiving whole-hearted support. The congregation had no problems with finance because members were putting their money “where the action was”—and there was plenty to claim their attention. Theirs wasn’t a talking, listening religion, but an active outreach spurred by the command “Go ye into all the world.”

PRIORITIES

And finally, the church must recognize that people are more important than money or programs, that the benefit to the giver must always outweigh the benefit to the church. Religion centers on people—not churches, schools, or missions.

I was traveling with a friend of mine, the editor of a small city newspaper, to Crater Lake, Oregon, when he said, “Yesterday I joined a church.”

“Which one?” I asked. He named one of the more popular ones.

“What did you have to do?”

“Do?”

“Yes. Didn’t you have to do something, give up something, change something?”

“No. Why should I? Do you have to do something to join a church?”

“Well, I always thought so, or why join? If there is no change in the lifestyle, it seems a person could spend his time in more interesting pursuits—and besides, joining could cost a lot of money.”

He laughed, “Oh, they contacted me about church support and I said I’d help out.”

I still wonder about that church. Is that all they were interested in—financial support? Is that why they wanted him for a member? Wasn’t a soul involved somewhere? Weren’t they interested in him as an individual? I’m sure the church didn’t benefit from his support very long; he quit attending soon after he

joined. We need to remember often: *A person will support anything he believes in, regardless of the cost.*

Possibly we need to review our priorities. Jesus told Peter to “feed my sheep,” not start some enterprise or initiate some promotion or program. Every activity of the church will merit importance only as it is designed and implemented to build Christians. Otherwise, the most impressive endeavors will be empty, unsatisfying memorials to the misdirection of Christian priorities. Churches must not become mausoleums, a final resting place for the living dead. They must be houses of God filled with men and women, teeming with life, bursting with activity. They must not

be merry-go-rounds but aerial tramways, always reaching upward to higher objectives and achievements.

When we recognize that a lack of support is not a financial but a heart problem, then

we shall have a basis for solving it. And if, by God’s help, we can convince our members of the glories of salvation and the privilege of spending an eternity in a country free from sorrow, sickness, and death, then we shall be able to lead them past the obsolescence of this world, past the glitter and glamour of today, to the fantastic promise of tomorrow.

Their hearts will be filled with love and gratitude to God; their wellsprings of benevolence will fill His treasury to overflowing. Thus, we will be, first, developing Christians and, second, ensuring support for the church of God. Lack of finances will no longer be a problem. “For where your treasure is . . .” **E**



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Ellen G. White and Tithe

An Analysis of Four Controversial Statements

by Alberto Ronald Timm

Although the Seventh-day Adventist tithing system was in place by the end of the nineteenth century,¹ controversies have arisen recently about its practical application. Members who lose confidence in the church organization sometimes divert tithe to independent groups. They justify this by citing a few quotations from Ellen White describing her personal tithing practices.

Many of those criticisms are adequately addressed in "The History and Use of the Tithe,"² from the Ellen G. White Estate, Arthur L. White's *Ellen G. White: The Early Elmshaven Years*,³ in Roger W. Coon's "Tithe: Ellen G. White Counsel and Practice."⁴ It seems, however, that there is room for a direct analysis of four particular Ellen White statements.⁵

HUMBLE PLACES OF WORSHIP

The first comes from 1897. The churches of Oakland, California, and Battle Creek, Michigan, were facing serious problems meeting their "quite heavy" expenses.⁶ Since some congregations had been using tithe to cover operating expenses,⁷ members of these two churches wrote to Ellen White in Australia asking about the propriety of diverting some tithe to solve their situation. On March 14, 1897, Ellen White replied:

"From that which has been shown me, the tithe is not to be withdrawn from the treasury. Every penny of this money is the Lord's own sacred treasure, to be appropriated for a special use.

"There was a time when there was very little missionary work done, and the tithe was accumulating. In some instances the tithe was used for similar purposes as is now proposed. When the Lord's people felt

aroused to do missionary work in home and foreign missions, and to send missionaries to all parts of the world, those handling sacred interests should have had clear, sanctified discernment to understand how the means should be appropriated. . . .

"The light which the Lord has given me on this subject is that the means in the treasury for the support of the ministers in the different fields is not to be used for any other purpose."⁸

But on the next day she added: "*There are exceptional cases, where poverty is so deep that in order to secure the humblest place of worship, it may be necessary to appropriate the tithes.* But that place is not Battle Creek or Oakland."⁹

The first statement shows clearly that although tithe had been used previously for local church expenses, such a use should cease because of great missionary challenges,¹⁰ and also

increasing light regarding tithe. But the second statement speaks of "exceptional cases" to the rule, involving very poor places of worship.

A careful analysis suggests that Ellen White is referring to a genuine missionary situation in which the church building is described as the "humblest place of worship." The issue is not the construction, renovation, improvement, or maintenance of a church in an established area (which in the same context she strongly disapproves),¹¹ but the danger of losing the "place of worship" itself, thus impairing the church's mission in that poverty-stricken place.

HELPING NEEDY WORKERS

A second relevant Ellen White comment regarding tithe is an undated oral statement she made to her

**"From that which
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son W. C. White:

“The Lord has shown me that the experience which your father [James White] and I have passed through in poverty and deprivation, in the early days of our work, has given to me a keen appreciation and sympathy for others who are passing through similar experiences of want and suffering. *And where I see workers in this cause that have been true and loyal to the work, who are left to suffer, it is my duty to speak in their behalf. If this does not move the brethren to help them, then I must help them, even if I am obliged to use a portion of my tithe in doing so.*”¹²

Although the specific date of this statement is not known, W.

C. White explains that “these experiences relate mostly to the years we [he and his mother] were in Europe [1885-1887] and Australia [1891-1900], and to the years 1900 to 1906, in behalf of the work in the Southern states.”¹³ If we analyze the reality of Adventist work in Europe,¹⁴ Australia,¹⁵ and the Southern states¹⁶ during these respective periods, we see that each of these places was at that time a missionary field without adequate financial provision. Members in established fields were not sufficiently concerned in helping the missions.

At the 1901 General Conference session, Ellen White confronted the issue: “I told the Lord that when I came to Battle Creek this time, I would ask you why you have withheld means from the work in Australia.”¹⁷ Only with the reorganization of the General Conference in 1901 came “a formula” for better support of missions.¹⁸ Since sometimes the organization itself did not provide adequate means for its missionaries, Ellen White felt she had a special duty regarding workers who, while “true and loyal to the work,” “are left to suffer.” Whenever she met workers in such circumstances, she first tried to solve the problem by speaking “in their behalf” to local administrators. If this did “not move the brethren to help them,” then she considered it her own duty to help them, even if that meant using a portion of her own tithe.

W. C. White, commenting on Ellen White’s statement made to him (quoted above), makes a clear distinction between her normal and sporadic procedures. He explains that while “a full tithe” was “paid on her salary, to [the] church or conference treasurer,” occasional appropriations from the tithe of “the in-

crease from her books” went to meet the needs of those suffering workers. W. C. White argues that while his mother could make such special uses of tithe through the “special enlightenment” she received from the Lord as part of her prophetic authority, neither “church members” nor “ministers” are authorized to do likewise.¹⁹

It is significant that she began her statement with the expression “the Lord has shown me.” To Ron Graybill, such an expression means “that what was written was written under the inspiration of the Spirit of God.”²⁰ So, by declaring that the Lord had shown her to make such special uses of her tithe, Ellen White is evidently

stressing her singular prophetic authority to act in such a way.

Clearly, therefore, Ellen White recognizes in this second statement (1) that she made some special uses of her own tithe, (2) that such uses were only in relation to problems neglected by the organization, and (3) that she did it on the basis of her prophetic insight.

SUPPORTING THE NEGLECTED SOUTH

A more detailed statement on special use of tithe is found in a letter Ellen White wrote on January 22, 1905, to G. F. Watson, president of the Colorado Conference. While reproving Watson’s critical attitude against sending tithe to support the work in the South, she said:

“It has been presented to me for years that my tithe was to be appropriated by myself to aid the white and colored ministers who were neglected and did not receive sufficient properly to support their families. When my attention was called to aged ministers, white or black, it was my special duty to investigate into their necessities and supply their needs. This was to be my special work, and I have done this in a number of cases. No man should give notoriety to the fact that in special cases the tithe is used in that way.

“In regard to the colored work in the South, that field has been and is still being robbed [in 1905] of the means that should come to the workers in that field. If there have been cases where our sisters have appropriated their tithe to the support of the ministers working for the colored people in the South, let every man, if he is wise, hold his peace.

“I have myself appropriated my tithe to the most needy

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cases brought to my notice. I have been instructed to do this; and as the money is not withheld from the Lord's treasury, it is not a matter that should be commented upon, for it will necessitate my making known these matters, which I do not desire to do, because it is not best.

"Some cases have been kept before me for years, and *I have supplied their needs from the tithe, as God has instructed me to do. And if any person shall say to me, Sister White, will you appropriate my tithe where you know it is most needed, I shall say, Yes, I will;* and I have done so. I commend those sisters who have placed their tithe where it is most needed to help do a work that is being left undone, and if this matter is given publicity, it will create a knowledge which would better be left as it is. I do not care to give publicity to this work which the Lord has appointed me to do, and others to do.

"I send this matter to you so that you shall not make a mistake. Circumstances alter cases. I would not advise that anyone should make a practice of gathering up tithe money. But *for years there have now and then been persons who have lost confidence in the appropriation of the tithe who have placed their tithe in my hands,* and said that if I did not take it they would themselves appropriate it to the families of the most needy ministers they could find. *I have taken the money, given a receipt for it, and told them how it was appropriated.*"²¹

The reorganization of Adventist church structure in 1901, with some revisions in 1903,²² opened new frontiers to the growth of missions in a worldwide dimension. However, the Southern field still remained "the most needy and the most discouraging field in the world."²³ Additionally, not until 1910 did the church offer systematic sustentation "for the support of sick and aged laborers, and the widows and children of deceased laborers."²⁴

In such a context, Ellen White explains that "for years" the Lord had placed upon her shoulders the "special duty" of investigating the needs of "the white and colored ministers who were neglected and did not receive sufficient properly to support their families." "Aged ministers, white or black," merited particular attention. And again she appeals to her prophetic authority by declaring that God "instructed" her to supply "their needs from the tithe."

Although there is a close relationship between the contents of the letter to Watson and the previous oral statement to W. C. White, this goes far beyond the previous statement. She explains that not only (1) did she appropriate her own tithe to the most needy cases but also (2) she had accepted tithe from others to be distributed at her discretion, and also (3) that in some

cases members, instead of paying tithe in their own conferences, had sent it to ministers evangelizing the needy Southern field. She saw no reason to reprove them because the Southern "field has been and is still being robbed of the means that should come to the workers in that field."

The use of such expressions as "it has been presented to me for years," "my attention was called," "I have been instructed to do this," "some cases have been kept before me for years," and "as God has instructed me to do" seem to confirm Ellen White's singular prophetic authority, as in her oral statement to W. C. White on the same subject. But the phrase "this work which the Lord has appointed me to do, and others to do" is not as clear as the previous ones. The question naturally arises: Did the Lord reveal to these "others" the duty of helping poor workers in the same way He did to Ellen White?

In answering that question we must remember, first, that Ellen White mentioned "commend[ing] those sisters" who applied their tithe in such a way. Though we have no basis to assume that all private tithe sent to the South came from Ellen White's direct advice, she obviously preferred to accept such tithe, give a receipt, and send it where she felt it was more needed rather than allowing individuals to apply it according to their personal judgment. While Ellen White said she personally accepted tithe from members who wanted "to help do a work that [was] left undone," she also warned against the practice "of gathering up tithe money." Since she received and applied tithe only in special cases and always in harmony with instructions received directly from God, it could not be considered as withholding tithe "from the Lord's treasury." But she also recognized that, although she was doing a "special work," some members would certainly misunderstand. So she added at the same time that it was "not a matter that should be commented upon" and "no man should give notoriety to" it, because "if this matter is given publicity, it [would] create a knowledge which would better be left as it is."

Then, finally, one of Ellen White's major dreams became reality through the establishment of the sustentation plan that became effective in 1911.²⁵ As a result, on March 7 of that year she wrote to E. R. Palmer, secretary of the Sustentation Fund Committee:²⁶

"In the past I have many times spoken of our duty to sustain the needy ones among the Lord's laborer's [*sic*] who, because of age, or on account of weakness caused by exposure or hard labor in the Lord's work, can not longer bear the burdens they have once borne. . . . My brethren, it is right that sure

plans be laid for the support of our aged workers, or the younger workers who are suffering because of overwork. It is right that a fund should be created to make comfortable these faithful soldiers who still long to put brain, bone, and muscle into the work of giving the last note of warning to the world.²⁷

It can be assumed that once inadequate financial circumstances were remedied, Ellen White discontinued her special usage of tithe.

PAYING MINISTERS' WIVES

A fourth instance in which Ellen White speaks about a special use of tithe is found in a letter to G. A. Irwin, I. H. Evans, U. Smith, and A. T. Jones on April 21, 1898, in which she discusses the matter of some ministers' wives who worked full-time without pay.²⁸

\$ Stewardship

We are God's stewards, entrusted by Him with time and opportunities, abilities and possessions, and the blessings of the earth and its resources. We are responsible to Him for their proper use. We acknowledge God's ownership by faithful service to Him and our fellowmen, and by returning tithes and giving offerings for the proclamation of His gospel and the support and growth of His church. Stewardship is a privilege given to us by God for nurture in love and the victory over selfishness and covetousness. The steward rejoices in the blessings that come to others as a result of his faithfulness. (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:15; 1 Chron. 29:14; Haggai 1:3-11; Mal. 3:8-12; 1 Cor. 9:9-14; Matt. 23:23; Rom. 15:26, 27.)

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This was not a new issue. On March 22, 1898, while addressing the situation of women as workers in the cause of God, she explained that she had received "light upon this subject" even before she went to Australia in 1891:

"Some matters have been presented to me in regard to the laborers who are seeking to do all in their power to win souls to Jesus Christ. . . . The ministers are paid for their work, and this is well. And if the Lord gives the wife, as well as the husband, the burden of labor, and if she devotes her time and strength to visiting from family to family, opening the Scriptures to them, although the hands of ordination have not been laid upon her, she is accomplishing a work that is in the line of ministry. Should her labors be counted as nought, and her husband's salary be no more than that of the servant of God whose wife does not give herself to the work, but remains at home to care for her family?

"I was instructed that there are matters that need to be considered. Injustice has been done to women who labor just as devotedly as their husbands, and who are recognized by God as being as necessary to the work of ministry as their husbands. The method of paying men laborers and not their wives is a plan not after the Lord's order. Injustice is thus done. A mistake is made. The Lord does not favor this plan. This arrangement, if carried out in our conferences, is liable to discourage our sisters from qualifying themselves for the work they should engage in."²⁹

One month later (April 21, 1898), while addressing the same problem, she went a step further by mentioning some specific names:

"There are ministers' wives, Sisters Starr, Haskell, Wilson, and Robinson, who have been devoted, earnest, whole-souled workers, giving Bible readings and praying with families, helping along by personal efforts just as successfully as their husbands. These women give their whole time, and are told that they receive nothing for their labors because their husbands receive wages. I tell them to go forward and all such decisions will be revised. The Word says, 'The labourer is worthy of his hire' (Luke 10:7 kjv). When any such decision as this is made, *I will in the name of the Lord, protest. I will feel it my duty to create a fund from my tithe money to pay these women who are accomplishing just as essential work as the ministers are doing, and this tithe I will reserve for work in the same line as that of the ministers, hunting for souls, fishing for souls.*"³⁰

In analyzing these statements, remember that Ellen White is writing specifically about ministers' wives who had "the burden of labor," devoting all their time and their strength to "giving Bible readings

and praying with families” and “educating” new believers. Although those women incurred personal expenses in devoting themselves full-time to ministry, they remained unpaid. Ellen White regarded this as a “mistake,” an “injustice,” “the Lord does not favor.” Because “the labourer is worthy of his hire” (Luke 10:7, KJV), and those who “preach the gospel should live of the gospel” (1 Cor. 9:14, KJV), she considered it her “duty to create a fund” from her tithe “to pay these women.”³¹ Perhaps to rectify the situation, in 1900 the General Conference Committee established a “Committee on Woman’s Work.” Mrs. S. N. Haskell was one of its members.³²

The question remaining now is whether those statements of Ellen White about paying wages to ministers’ wives refer only to the particular instances mentioned here, or if they also provide a pattern to solve unjust cases today.³³ One might find some kind of endorsement of a special use of tithe in solving situations of dire financial injustice regarding those who work “in the line of ministry.” But the problem is defining what is a real situation of injustice.

SUMMARY

By analyzing the four main statements of Ellen White about special use of tithe, we see that each one deals with a specific financial problem. While the first allows tithe use to avoid losing “the humblest place of worship” in a missionary context, it does not endorse the use of tithe for construction, renovation, improvement, or maintenance of a church in an established area (which, in the same context, Ellen White strongly disapproves). The other three statements deal with the unique financial burdens of suffering workers neglected by the organization and of some ministers’ wives who worked as Bible instructors without pay. Whereas in the first three statements either the place of worship or the workers are seen in a clear missionary setting, the fourth does not necessarily refer to such circumstances.

All those four special uses of tithe show a perfect parallelism between the existence of a financial problem and a financial solution to it. Nowhere does Ellen White advocate financial pressure to force a change in denominational policy.

Although those statements provide some principles to a correct distribution of tithe, they should not be stressed beyond their original intent. While approving other people sending their tithe to extremely needy fields in some special situations, Ellen White didn’t recommend this as a regular practice. On the contrary, she wrote in 1907:

“Let none feel at liberty to retain their tithe, to use

according to their own judgment. They are not to use it for themselves in an emergency, not to apply it as they see fit, even in what they may regard as the Lord’s work. . . . Let the work no longer be hedged up because the tithe has been diverted into various channels other than the one to which the Lord has said it should go. Provision is to be made for these other lines of work. They are to be sustained, but not from the tithe. God has not changed; the tithe is still to be used for the support of the ministry.”³⁴ **E**

¹Cf. Bert B. Haloviak and F. Donald Yost, “A Report on the Use of Tithe in the Seventh-day Adventist Church” (Washington, D.C.: Office of Archives and Statistics of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1976), pp. 19-22; Brian E. Strayer, “Adventist Tithepaying—The Untold Story,” *Spectrum*, October 1986, pp. 46-48.

²See “The History and Use of the Tithe,” Ellen G. White Estate shelf document, [1990].

³See Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Early Elmshaven Years* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1981), pp. 389-397.

⁴Roger W. Coon, “Tithe: Ellen G. White Counsel and Practice,” in Supplement to the *Adventist Review*, November 7, 1991.

⁵It will be assumed throughout this article that where Ellen White discusses her use of tithe, she is generally referring to the first 10 percent of her earnings.

⁶Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases* (Washington, D.C.: E.G. White Estate, 1981), vol. 1, p. 182.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 191.

⁸Ellen G. White, *Special Testimonies for Ministers and Workers* (Battle Creek, Mich.: 197), vol. 10, pp. 16-18.

⁹_____, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 1, p. 1897. (Italics supplied.)

¹⁰The main studies on the development of Seventh-day Adventist missionary thought are P. Gerard Damsteegt, *Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1977); and Borge Schantz, “The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Missionary Thought: Contemporary Appraisal” (Ph.D. diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1983).

¹¹See E. G. White, *Special Testimonies for Ministers and Workers*, vol. 10, pp. 16-18.

¹²Ellen G. White in Arthur L. White, p. 393, (Italics supplied.)

¹³W. C. White, in Arthur L. White, p. 393.

¹⁴See D. A. Delafield, *Ellen G. White in Europe: 1885-1887* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1975); Pierre Winandy, ed., *Ellen G. White and Europe* (Newbold College, England: Ellen G. White Research Centre, 1987).

¹⁵See Milton F. Krause, “The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Australia: 1885-1900” (M.A. thesis, University of Sydney, 1968).

¹⁶See Ronald D. Graybill, *Mission to Black America: The True Story of James Edson White and the Riverboat Morning Star* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1971), pp. 52-61; Louis B. Reynolds, *We Have Tomorrow: The Story of American Seventh-day Adventists With an African Heritage* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1984), pp. 85-95.

¹⁷Ellen G. White, "In the Regions Beyond," *General Conference Bulletin*, 1901, p. 84.

¹⁸Cf. Arthur W. Spalding, *Origin and History of Seventh-day Adventists* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1962), vol. 3, p. 44.

¹⁹W. C. White, "Regarding the Use of the Tithe."

²⁰Ron Graybill, "The 'I saw' Parallels in Ellen White's Writings," *Adventist Review*, July 29, 1982.

²¹Ellen G. White, in Arthur L. White, pp. 395, 396. (Italics supplied.)

²²See Barry David Oliver, *SDA Organizational Structure: Past, Present and Future* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1989), pp. 162-204.

²³Ellen G. White, in Arthur L. White, pp. 394, 395.

²⁴See W. A. Spicer, "General Conference Committee Council," *Review and Herald*, Dec. 22, 1910, pp. 13, 15; A. G. Daniells, "The Sustentation Fund," pp. 14, 15; A. G. Daniells, *The Sustentation Fund* (Washington, D.C.: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists [1910]).

²⁵See Spicer, "General Conference Committee Council," p. 14.

²⁶Daniells, *The Sustentation Fund*, p. 15.

²⁷Ellen G. White *Manuscript Releases* (Silver Spring, Md.: E. G. White Estate, 1990-1993), vol. 3, p. 272.

²⁸*Ibid.*, vol. 12, pp. 160, 161.

²⁹*Ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 323.

³⁰*Ibid.*, vol. 12, pp. 160, 161. (Italics supplied.)

³¹In another place she writes: "God is a God of justice, and if the ministers receive a salary for their work, their wives, who devote themselves just as disinterestedly to the work, should be paid in addition to the wages their husbands receive, even though they may not ask for this" (Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* [Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1915], p. 453).

³²See "Proceedings of the General Conference Committee," *General Conference Bulletin*, 1900, p. 123.

³³Ellen White is not advocating here any position for or against women's ordination. Her concern was the financial injustice to ministers' wives who worked full-time without remuneration.

³⁴Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 9, pp. 247-250.

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Attitudes & Answers

by G. Edward Reid

1 I think there's way too much emphasis on money from the pulpit.

The fact that more than 30 percent of Jesus' teachings deal with money and possessions shows the priority He placed on giving. Just as giving is a tangible evidence of God's love for us, so it is one of the ways we demonstrate our love for God. Calls for offerings are a response to the opening providences of God.

2 My giving is really nobody's business but my own.

Through the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14) and the parable of the misguided merchant (Luke 12:16), Jesus clearly tells His followers, then and now, that we are accountable for our possessions and indeed our lives as well.

3 I'll give what I can when I can.

Giving is a way of regularly renewing our loyalty as disciples. Such loyalty isn't spur-of-the-moment, but an ongoing commitment.

4 It's not the amount I give that concerns God. Rather, it's my attitude.

In one sense, yes (see 2 Cor. 8:9-15). But as good stewards we should ask ourselves, Does my giving demonstrate a commensurate trust in God's provision?

5 I'd rather just give a lump sum once a year than try to keep track of a monthly or weekly amount.

Could we manage our households without the blessing of regular resources? The household of faith is maintained best by the same ability to plan.

6 We're going through a really tough time right now. We'll catch up on our giving when things get better.

Adventist churches abound with testimonies of members who have been extremely generous even though they were very poor (see 2 Cor. 8:2). It is in times like this that we need more than ever God's promised wisdom and blessing (see Prov. 3:5-10).

Stewardship Adds Value to Life

by Ken Wade

*Viewed as managership instead of ownership,
the Bible plan takes on a whole new flavour.*

When Bertha Adams died of malnutrition, everyone except a court-appointed lawyer assumed she was just another victim of poverty. She had wasted away to a mere 22-kilogram skeleton by the time social workers took her to a hospital. But two days before she died, the lawyer discovered two safe-deposit keys in the hovel where she'd lived for 25 years. The boxes contained \$US799,581.50 in cash, plus hundreds of valuable share certificates.

As it turned out, Bertha was a victim of greed—her own—not poverty. All her clothing had come from the Salvation Army. And all her money had gone into the safe-deposit boxes. She had focused so intently on getting that she had no time for giving. She wouldn't part with a cent, even to keep herself alive.

She was a classic example of stewardship gone awry.

Stewardship? It has to do with managing your affairs and money. Some spell it “stewardship.” But the term should conjure up a picture of properly managing every resource of life to accomplish the greatest good.

In Bible times a steward was a person of high office—a chairman of the board. He was the man who, when the master of the house left on a trip, oversaw all the master's business.

Unfortunately, the word stewardship has been misused, mainly in churches, to mean “giving” instead of “managing”.

But there's something else, something that lay as the root cause of Bertha Adams's death. It's our own inability or unwillingness to see our personal resources as transient, passing things that we have only on loan. It's the thing that causes us to shun the subject of



death and its ultimate lesson expressed in the adage, “You can't take it with you.”

In short, we hate to admit that everything we have really belongs to Someone else and that we have it all on a call-loan basis to use for His glory. We prefer to focus on what we have—the gift—and forget the Giver.

John Margulies borrowed \$1300 from his sister, Marilyn, and flew from California to London. In London he went to his parents' home and stole two paintings worth \$100,000. When he arrived back in California with the paintings, Marilyn phoned her parents to say that an unknown thief had contacted her and demanded \$20,000 ransom for the pictures.

The Margulieses gave the money to Marilyn. She quickly passed it on to John. John used it to make a down payment to the man he had hired to kill his parents and hasten his inheritance of their \$25 million estate.

Shocking, you say? That a young man could be so in love with his parents' money that he would want them killed? It's disgusting!

Jesus told a story very much like it in Matthew 21. And the reason He told it was to help people see their own shallowness in relation to God. He pointed the story right at the self-righteous, hateful Pharisees who were plotting to kill Him, but the story is equally applicable to our day, when men cannot reach out and crucify God, but must remain content simply to proclaim Him dead.

Jesus' story is about a householder who planted a vineyard, then moved away, leaving it in the care of tenants. When the owner sent servants to collect the profits, the tenants beat, stoned and killed them.

Finally the owner sent his son, but the tenants had even less respect for him. "This is the heir," they said. "Let us kill him and have his inheritance" (verse 38).

The story clearly caught the wealthy, landed Pharisees off their guard. They proclaimed their own sentence when Jesus asked what the owner would do with his tenants. "He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons," they said (verse 41).

Jesus wanted the Pharisees—and us—to see ourselves in this story. He wanted us to see that when we lay personal claim to the things we've produced or gotten through the use of resources and strength lent to us by God, we are stealing just as much as the evil tenants in the story. And we're in just as much danger of falling into the trap that says, "Love the gift, but hate the Giver."

But it isn't popular today to think of God as the owner of everything.

The Bible teaches that God owns the cattle on a thousand hills—that the world is His and the fullness thereof. It teaches that even we ourselves are not our own because we are bought with the price of the Redeemer's blood (Psalm 50:10, 12; 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20).

We must see ourselves as managers of the infinite resources of an eternal God and quit fighting with God about who owns our things. Then we can begin to work with God and, with His counsel, learn to manage wisely the resources He puts at our disposal and accomplish far more good than we ever could on our own.

Bertha Adams was too concerned with getting and keeping to manage well. She didn't realize that one must have some outgo, as well as income, if life is to be really profitable. How much happier her life would have been if she had enjoyed three good meals every day, or if she could have seen a smile brought to a child's face by some small gift, or if she could have seen ruined lives changed for the better through her gifts.

Viewed as managership instead of just ownership, the plan of stewardship takes on a whole new flavour. We can see Abraham, the wealthy old patriarch, as a good steward of God—not only because he presented a tithe to Melchizedek (Genesis 14:18-20), but also because he made sure that God got the glory for all his wealth.

When the king of Sodom offered to let Abraham keep the spoil the patriarch had rescued from Sodom's conquerors, Abraham refused. Not because he couldn't use the goods, but because he wanted everyone around him to know that it was God's blessing, not man's spoil. That made him wealthy. And the message got across.

Years later when Abimelech, the king of Gerar, realized that Abraham was a powerful force that must be reckoned with, he sought a mutual nonaggression pact. He began the negotiations by acknowledging the source of Abraham's prosperity. "God is with you in all that you do," he said (21:22).

Abraham had reached the aim of true stewardship that Jesus spoke about in the Sermon on the Mount nearly 2000 years later. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

The real goal in all stewardship is in the furtherance of the Master's kingdom. We pray, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (6:10, NJV), and in doing the Master's will we can hasten the coming of His kingdom (2 Peter 3:11, 12).

And that's where giving comes back into the picture. God's goodness is revealed in His givingness. "For God so loved the world that He gave . . ." (John 3:16).

Proper stewardship is a high goal, and it sometimes seems out of reach to our naturally selfish natures; but it's a goal worth achieving. Jesus made it clear in the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30) that the person who wisely uses small amounts of the Master's resources will soon be blessed with larger resources and wider opportunities to bring success to himself and his Master.

Stewardship, then, is to be cherished. I'm a steward of the God who owns everything I see! I'm vice-president for management in the biggest corporation in the universe! **E**

**Viewed as
managership instead
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Planning Our Giving to God

by Don E. Crane

The Origin of Planned Giving

What is “Planned Giving?” Where did it come from? Why is it important to Seventh-day Adventists? These questions are of fundamental importance and form the basis for this presentation.

- *Planned Giving originated early—in the heart and mind of God.* He planned His giving of “the Lamb . . . from the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8). God planned His gift of creation. By careful design, He brought forth something from nothing. (See Heb. 11:3)

- *Jesus planned the giving of the gospel to all the world.* He also planned the method of delivery of this gift. He said to His disciples, “. . . you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Note the symbolism of the four target areas where twenty-first century disciples proclaim the gospel:

Jerusalem—represents our witness in the local church and the community,

All Judea—illustrates the responsibility that is ours to impact the peoples and territories of local conferences or unions,

Samaria—represents our unity in sharing the gospel in the international communities of our world divisions,

To the ends of the earth—represents our global assignment as a world church.

- *The Gospel commission, as proclaimed by the Seventh-day Adventists,* is gathering momentum as we approach the grand climax of earth’s history. Statistician Dr. F. Donald Yost, Director of the GC Department of Archives and Statistics, estimates that by the year 2000 our membership will reach 12 million and the world population will be 6.3 billion. What a challenge to Seventh-day Adventists!

- *A major responsibility of Stewardship Ministries* in the coming years, will be to work with church leadership in providing and implementing a religious education

curriculum for church members and church leaders. An important segment of this religious education curriculum needs to be Christ-centered, wholistic, stewardship, and tithe and offering education. As we face the challenge of an exploding world population with millions to be reached with the everlasting gospel, we recognize that Planned Giving for Global Mission is not an option but a fundamental essential to carry out our complex global assignment. Jesus indicated the need for planning when He said, “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it?” (Luke 14:28)

- *Planned Giving is a Divine plan.* “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me” (Matt. 16:24). “It was by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who gave His life for the life of the world, that this plan for systematic giving was devised” (*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 66). “I was pointed back to the days of the apostles, and saw that God laid the plan by the descent of His Holy Spirit, and that by the gift of prophecy He counseled His people in regard to a system of benevolence” (*Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 190).

- *Planned Giving is also contemporary.* God’s modern-day Word of Prophecy describes the plan clearly and precisely. “God has devised a plan by which all may give as He has prospered them, and which will make giving a habit without waiting for special calls. . . . Until all shall carry out the plan of systematic benevolence, there will be a failure in coming up to the apostolic rule” (*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 411).

As a young minister, I studied the “apostolic rule” and searched for its New Testament roots. Finally, I came across this clue: “In his first letter to the church at Corinth, Paul gave the believers instruction regarding the general principles underlying the support of God’s work in the earth” (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 335). We find the “apostolic rule” in Scripture: “On the first day of every week, each of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income,

saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made" (1 Cor. 16:2). Since the days of the Apostles and the early Christian church, this important Bible text has been used to teach regularity in giving on a personal or family level, and to teach giving to God based on blessings received.

Seventh-day Adventists Follow the Plan

Based on the "apostolic rule", the Seventh-day Adventist Church recommends and encourages systematic giving for gospel sharing in five important areas: 1. Tithe, 2. Local Church, 3. Conference Development, 4. World Missions, 5. Special Projects and Miscellaneous Offerings. Let's take a closer look at each of these major areas of Planned Giving.



STEP 1—Tithe

Step 1 is to return God's holy tithe. The tithe reminds us of our partnership with God. "The greatest lesson to be taught and to be learned is the lesson of co-partnership with Christ in the work of salvation" (*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 434). The tithe, according to Scripture, is ten percent of our increase. It is interesting to note that the Sabbath and the tithe are described in the Bible as *holy*. "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy" (Ex. 20:8). "A tithe of everything is holy to the Lord" (Lev. 27:30). God's modern-day Prophet says of this: "The very same language is used concerning the Sabbath as in the law of the tithe: . . . the validity of both is assumed, and their deep spiritual import explained" (*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 66). *Today God's remnant church needs to unashamedly proclaim these two "holies."* Although these two identifying marks of our stewardship relationship with God are "holy", they are still subject to man's freedom of choice. God will not force anyone to do His will. It is the right of every individual to either honor or reject these Divine requirements.

Where is the tithe to be deposited? This is an important question. Today many Christians are inventing their own storehouses. Many feel at liberty to direct the tithe as they would their voluntary offerings. But God says, "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in myhouse" (Mal. 3:10). According to this text, it is clear that God has His own storehouse. Many may be surprised to learn that from the early days of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, our pioneers instructed both converts and members that the local church was the "door" to the storehouse, and the conference/field office was the "storehouse." Today we follow the same time-honored practice and

advise local churches to fund local church activities and projects through voluntary free-will offerings.

Returning the tithe sets in motion the *Tithe Sharing Plan*. The *Tithe Sharing Plan* is unique to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Tithe sharing reminds us that we are members of a world church with a global assignment to proclaim the everlasting gospel to all the world. Do church leaders have a responsibility to teach tithing faithfulness? "It is part of your work to teach those whom you bring into the truth to bring the tithe into the storehouse as an acknowledgment of their dependence upon God." (*Evangelism*, p. 250). Frequently people ask: "What is the best method for returning God's tithe?" The best plan is to follow the "apostolic rule" by setting aside the tithe at home. As soon as we receive income, we place God's tithe, together with our gifts and offerings, into a Tithe and Offering envelope. Then we take God's tithe and our offerings to church and give them to God in an act of worship. *The regular use of Tithe and Offering envelopes is the single most important tool in religious education for Planned Giving.*



STEP 2—Local Church

Step 2 is the Local Church Budget Plan and Building Fund. The Seventh-day Adventist Church recommends that each local church develop its own spiritual and financial plans on an annual basis. What would you like your church to accomplish during the next twelve months? What about the next five years? Set aside specific times during each calendar year to study local church needs and to prioritize them. The goal of every Seventh-day Adventist church should be:

- 1) to help church members deepen their personal relationship with Jesus Christ;
- 2) to nurture members in a clearer understanding and practice of God's Word;
- 3) to be a loving and caring fellowship;
- 4) to be an outreach/witness training center.

To allow adequate time to develop "group ownership" of plans, *the Seventh-day Adventist Church recommends that all local church committees begin the planning and budgeting process three months before the end of the church fiscal year.* This should take place immediately following the election of new officers. After local church committees have developed their spiritual and financial plans, these plans are frequently integrated

into a Church Budget by a Church Board or Stewardship/Finance Committee. The Church Board recommends the Church Master Plan and Budget and calls a local church Business Meeting. At the church Business Meeting, the pastor, with the help of lay leaders, presents the church's short- and long-term objectives for nurture, fellowship, and outreach. The Church Master Plan, together with the Church Budget to underwrite it, are then voted and church members are invited to do their proportionate part in supporting the local church.

This is only the first stage of a successful local church planning and budgeting process. A coordinated plan of education, information, and invitation must follow. *Church members need to be invited to commit themselves on an annual basis to the local church Master Plan and Church Budget.*



Step 3—Conference Development

The third step in Planned Giving is Conference Development. Conference Development unites the sisterhood of churches within the conference territory in spiritual and financial enterprises far greater than the ability of a single member or church. Some of these long-term spiritual and financial objectives could be as follows: Global Mission plans for entering new territories, evangelism,

*church construction, evangelistic centers, youth camps, elementary school subsidies, homes for pastors, medical clinics, and academy capital improvement. The conference/field president is responsible for directing Conference Development with the help of a Lay Advisory and a small, resident Conference Development Committee of four to six members. Conference Development spiritual and financial plans are usually on and approved at a Constituency Session. Church members develop a feeling of "ownership" as they become involved in the process. The Seventh-day Adventist Church's *Calendar of Special Days and Offerings* makes provision for a Conference Development Report and an offering for Conference Development to be received monthly in every church.*



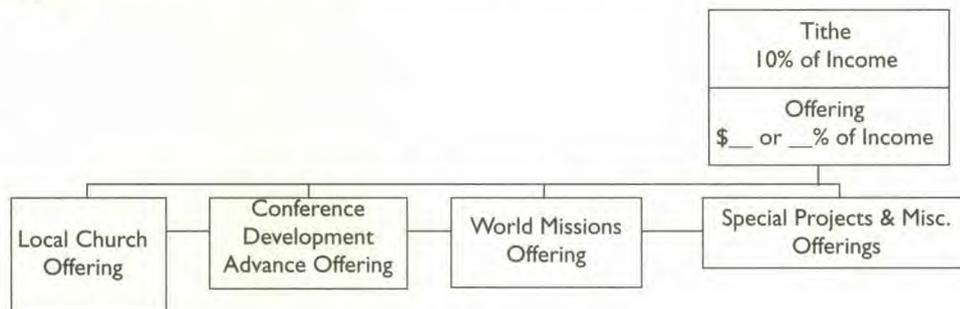
STEP 4—World Missions

The fourth step in Planned Giving is World Missions. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a miracle of modern missions. In 1900 there was only one Seventh-day Adventist for every 20,000 people in the world. Today, it is the most widespread Protestant denomination in the world. Fifty percent of all Seventh-day Adventists are under the age of 21. This tells us that the Seventh-day Adventist church is a strong and vigorous first-genera-

The Simplicity of Planned Giving

Steps

- 1 RETURN GOD'S TITHE
- 2 GIVE AN OFFERING
- 3 DISTRIBUTE THE OFFERING PROPORTIONATELY



tion church in many countries. What is it that has made the difference?

From the very beginning Seventh-day Adventists, like the early primitive Christian Church, have had a world vision. The apostle Paul, for example, commended the Corinthian church for their confession of the gospel of Christ and for their generosity in sharing. "Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints" (2 Cor. 8:4). "Unselfish liberality threw the early church into a transport of joy. . . ." (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 344). Referring to the need for world vision in our day, the prophet's pen writes: "This spirit of unsectional liberality should characterize the churches of today. They should continually keep the burden on their souls for the advancement of the cause of God in any and every place" (*Sketches from the Life of Paul*, p. 175).

Yet, despite these advances, the Seventh-day Adventist Church faces a great unfinished task. Three and a half billion people have never heard the gospel. There are 14 times as many unreached people as in the days of the Apostle Paul. While we stand on the threshold of God's eternal kingdom, we see a decline in systematic and planned giving to God for world missions. Some of the reasons follow:

- 1) increased giving to local needs,
- 2) elimination in some countries of the weekly Sabbath School World Mission Report,
- 3) rise in popularity of "project giving",
- 4) growth and support of independent ministries,
- 5) increase of non-SDA appeals,
- 6) secularization of some church members,
- 7) habit of many Adventists to give a "tip" rather than a sacrificial gift to World Missions.



STEP 5—Special Projects and Offerings

The fifth step, Special Projects and Offerings, is an increasingly important part of Planned Giving within the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Some people choose to direct some of their gifts and offerings. Planned Giving provides for this important need. We recommend that Project Giving be in addition to Steps 1-4. There will always be special projects and personal and miscellaneous offerings that are not included in the regular offerings for the Local Church, Conference Development, and World Missions. Following are some examples of these special projects and offerings: food for the sick or unemployed, a donation to your local church or conference, annual General Conference and Division offerings, ADRA, Adventist World Radio, Religious Liberty, College and Alumni Fund,

etc. We must always be open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit as we seek to provide balanced support for both regular church needs and special projects. (*We must also be sure that we have the means to sustain these special projects after the birthing process.*) The final choice is still yours . . . whether you give and for what! That's the way it's always been! And this is what makes Planned Giving a deeply personal, spiritual experience.

The Planned Giving Advantage

The benefits of Planned Giving are many: 1) Planned Giving is a means of expressing the covenant relationship we have with Jesus Christ as our Lord and Master, 2) Planned Giving provides members with the opportunity to follow the biblical directive of systematically putting God first, and giving to Him just as soon as the blessings are received, 3) Planned Giving makes it possible to project a "rate of anticipated income" for church needs (worship, fellowship, nurture, outreach, and construction), 4) Planned Giving makes provision for members to give to special projects, 5) Planned Giving reduces the number of special promotions and multiple calls for money, 6) Planned Giving ensures fair and proportionate distribution of funds. *But the advantages of Planned Giving are even greater than those just listed:* "Whenever God's people, in any period of the world, have cheerfully and willingly carried out His plan in systematic benevolence, and in gifts and offerings, they have realized the standing promise that prosperity should attend all their labors just in proportion as they obeyed His requirements" (*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 395).

The Simplicity of Planned Giving

The simplicity of Planned Giving is what gives Planned Giving universal acceptance. Planned Giving appeals to busy, modern professionals, new members, and converts, as well as churches and organizations who want to be self-reliant. The diagram on page 26 lists the three basic steps in implementing Planned Giving.

Whether you choose to follow Planned Giving as recommended by the Seventh-day Adventist church, or the more traditional plan of responding to multiple promotions and appeals, remember that it is a decision based on personal choice—a choice between overpromotion or unity in promotion—a choice between investing in independent ministries OR investing directly in your church's global mission (where financial books are open to review and funds are carefully audited).

Thank God for His divine plan of systematic be-

nevolence. Thank God for this simple plan that unites Seventh-day Adventists around the world. Thank God for biblically-based principles that make possible the global mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

“The gospel of Christ is the water of life.
And this water of life is free:
But it costs for the plumbing and all of the pipes
To bring it to you and to me.”

—Adlai A. Esteb

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Pastoral Prayer on Stewardship

Lord of all Creation,

By your command we, the daughters of Eve and the sons of Adam, have been placed as caretakers and stewards of this world we call home. To us you have given the right and responsibility to manage this earth and the wealth it produces. Some of us have more placed in our keeping, others less, but we share the same obligation to use and administer as wisely as we may the resources you have placed in our temporary custody.

We confess that we too often spend as though there were no other interests to consider but those of ourselves and our families. We fail to reckon with the fact that all we have is on loan from you, intended for the benefit of many.

We confess that we too often excuse our self-centeredness with prattle about being prepared for the future, as if you were not well able to look after all our tomorrows. We pretend to make security for ourselves by closeting our treasure where it blesses no one, though, for all we know, our souls may be required of us this very night.

Help us rely on your Spirit to tutor us in the arts of prudent investment, rather than upon counselors who see only dollar signs. Build up our faith until we trust you to provide for us when we honor you with our tithes and more.

Help us hold lightly the material goods that come our way so that you don't have to pry them from our hands in order to free our hearts. Help us restrain our endless desire to accumulate. Help us resist the daily barrage of advertising that encourages us to be possessed by our possessions. Free us so that we learn to receive and to give with equal joy.

Amen.



Sermon Outline



How to Honor God

Proverbs 3:9, 10

by Joel Sarli

Introduction

In the above text four points shine out clearly:

1. Every Christian has a duty of honoring God.
2. There is a method of honoring God “with our wealth.”
3. How He would have us render our wealth “With our firstfruits.” God first, then our own interest.
4. There is a sure result. Well-filled barns, and overflowing storehouses.

I. Why should we honor God?

1. Because He is the Creator and Preserver of the race.
2. Because He opens His hands, and satisfies the desires of every living thing.
3. Because He holds our lives in His hands and protects us day by day.
4. Because He provided atonement for the sins of the world, in His Son, Jesus Christ, through whom gospel, life and immortality are brought to light.
5. Because we as worshipers are made better by worshipping a God whose characteristics are ideal and eternal.
6. Because He holds out to the race for the great future.

II. What is meant by honoring God with our wealth?

This question is not difficult.

1. A farmer's wealth is what he gets in the way of crops from the ground.
2. The miner's wealth is what he digs from the earth.
3. The laborer's wealth is what he receives as wages each week, month or year.

III. What is meant by honoring God with the firstfruits?

1. *It means giving God his share before we take our own.*
The usual method among Adventists

is to provide for our own wants and needs, put a little aside for a rainy day, keep a little for our clothes and spending money, and then—if there is any left—we will honor God with our wealth.

2. *Illustration*

Suppose you ask a contractor to build a house. You furnish him with complete specifications, showing just how you wish the house to be put together, and finished. He reads the specifications over and signs a contract to do the work according to the plans and specifications.

In looking over the finished house you find that he has not gone by the plans and specifications at all; but has worked just as he happened to feel like working. Instead of putting in first-class timber as was called for, he put in inferior timber.

Question: Would you be under any moral or legal obligation to pay the man for his work? You know that the laws of the land would uphold you in withholding the amount you had agreed to pay.

3. *Now is it not the same with God?*

He has promised to fill our barns with plenty, and cause our presses to burst out with new wine, on condition of our honoring Him with the firstfruits of our wealth. If we provide for all our needs and wants first, and then drop a few cents in the contribution box out of what may be left, is God under the obligation to fulfill His promise of blessing? Not in the least.

4. *The reason God wants us to give Him His portion first is because such an act requires faith.*

In Heb. 11:6 we read, "And without faith it is impossible to please God. . ."

5. *Jesus taught us the same great truth* when He said in Matt. 6:33, "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and these things will be given to you as well."

6. *This is in line with Paul's teaching to the Gentile Christians, Corinth and Galatia.*

He taught them to lay by (for the cause of God) on the first day of the week, before spending a part of one's self, or for one's family; as the worker would most surely do during the second, third, and fourth days of the week.

7. *In giving God His part first, the believer puts God in the position where He has got to fulfill His part of the contract.*

IV. God's "Shall"

Beloved, God's "shall" is worth more than the

best gold bond issued by the most reliable of the government of earth.

1. "Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful" (Heb. 10:23).
2. The sun would fall from the heavens before God would fail to keep His word.
3. The solid ground beneath our feet would crumble and disappear before God would fail to keep His appointment with those who honor Him with their wealth, and with the firstfruits of their increase.

V. Taken literally or spiritually?

Some people say: "This promise of God's is not to be taken literally. It's a promise of spiritual blessings." Not so, my brothers and sisters.

1. The accepted rule for biblical interpretation is that where a passage can be interpreted literally, and convey sense, it should be so interpreted.
2. The fact is, that each and every term in this passage is to be taken literally. Spiritual blessings do not cause barns to overflow, or wine presses to burst out.
3. God here promises temporal blessings to those who will honor Him with their temporal things.
4. There are hundreds of Christians all over the world who have received the fulfillment of this promise literally.

Conclusion

1. Question: Do you know by actual experience the fulfillment of this promise? If not, then let me say that God is waiting to crown your life with this blessing also.
2. In this promise nothing is said as to the amount, or proportion with which we are asked to honor God. Were it not for the fact that we have a whole Bible, we might never have learned the full details of God's plan.
3. But today's message is: "Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over the new wine" (Prov. 3:9, 10).
4. May the Lord be pleased to fulfill this promise in your life.

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Help in Daily Living

Ellen G. White

There is an eloquence far more powerful than the eloquence of words in the quiet, consistent life of a pure, true Christian. What a man is has more influence than what he says.

The officers who were sent to Jesus came back with the report that never man spoke as He spoke. But the reason for this was that never man lived as He lived. Had His life been other than it was, He could not have spoken as He did. His words bore with them a convincing power, because they came from a heart pure and holy, full of love and sympathy, benevolence and truth.

It is our own character and experience that determine our influence upon others. In order to convince others of the power of Christ's grace, we must know its power in our own hearts and lives. The gospel we present for the saving of souls must be the gospel by which our own souls are saved. Only through a living faith in Christ as a personal Saviour is it possible to make our influence felt in a skeptical world. If we would draw sinners out of the swift-running current, our own feet must be firmly set upon the Rock, Christ Jesus.

The badge of Christianity is not an outward sign, not the wearing of a cross or a crown, but it is that which reveals the union of man with God. By the power of His grace manifested in the transformation of character the world is to be convinced that God has sent His Son as its Redeemer. No other influence that can surround the human soul has such power as the influence of an unselfish life. The strongest argument in favor of the gospel is a loving and lovable Christian.

God's Plans are the Best

Our plans are not always God's plans. He may see that it is best for us and for His cause to refuse our very best intentions, as He did in the case of David. But of one thing we may be assured, He will bless and use in

the advancement of His cause those who sincerely devote themselves and all they have to His glory. If He sees it best not to grant their desires He will counter-balance the refusal by giving them tokens of His love and entrusting to them another service.

In His loving care and interest for us, often He who understands us better than we understand ourselves refuses to permit us selfishly to seek the gratification of our own ambition. He does not permit us to pass by the homely but sacred duties that lie next us. Often these duties afford the very training essential to prepare us for a higher work. Often our plans fail that God's plans for us may succeed.

We are never called upon to make a real sacrifice for God. Many things He asks us to yield to Him, but in doing this we are but giving up that which hinders us in the heavenward way. Even when called upon to surrender those things which in themselves are

good, we may be sure that God is thus working out for us some higher good.

In the future life the mysteries that here have annoyed and disappointed us will be made plain. We shall see that our seemingly unanswered prayers and disappointed hopes have been among our greatest blessings.

We are to look upon every duty, however humble, as sacred because it is a part of God's service. Our daily prayer should be, "Lord, help me to do my best. Teach me how to do better work. Give me energy and cheerfulness. Help me to bring into my service the loving ministry of the Saviour."

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Ellen G. White was one of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. A prolific writer, she produced more than 100,000 pages by the time she died in 1915. Her work continues as a prophetic voice within the Adventist Church. This article comes from The Ministry of Healing, pages 469-474.



From the Editor's Pen

It Really Pays to go to Church

According to insurance companies, the person who goes to church regularly will live an average of 5.7 years longer.

At offering time, from the same business viewpoint, given a life expectancy of 72 years, you and I owe the church 7.9% purely from a fiscal perspective.

Zig Ziglar adds a couple of statistics and thoughts. "We also have approximately a 60% less chance of heart attack and 55% less chance of a one-car accident if we attend church regularly.

"A special note here to my non-Christian brothers, 'If you're not absolutely certain about where you are going when you die, I'd especially urge you to go to church regularly so you could at least delay your departure, because if you don't know Jesus, you've got it better here than you'll have it there.'"

Priorities in Life

Here's a perspective on giving and a thought about priorities from Leonard Griffith, a Canadian minister.

"In 1960, Elvis Presley was paid \$125,000 for one night's appearance on a TV program. He did two wiggles and sang two songs and for this received more than the yearly salary of the President of the United States. At the time it was estimated that an identical sum of money would pay the annual salaries of twenty-five schoolteachers, forty-two ministers, or sixty-three farmhands. It would provide a year's training for thirty or more nurses, would give one hundred twenty-five people a year of college, would stock ten mission hospitals with elemental tools and drugs, would feed three thousand refugee children for a whole year."

(From *Illustrations of Our Culture* by Leonard Griffith, Word Books Publishers, 1969.)

Every person has his own priorities. You can usually tell what they are by asking three questions about them:

1. What do you have time for?
2. How do you spend your wealth?
3. What do you allow to interrupt you?

I am a Dollar

I am not on speaking terms with the butcher;
 I am unable to buy a gallon of gasoline;
 I am small change at the supermarket;
 I am too little to go to the restaurant of the family;
 I am hardly even big enough for a decent tip;
 But when I go to church on Saturday, I am considered
SOME MONEY.



My Financial Commitment

1. Does it adequately reflect my love for Christ?
2. Does it exceed the tithe (10% of my income)?
3. Does its size require faith on my part to do it?
4. Would Jesus be pleased with me?
5. If God used it alone to determine my gratitude to Him, would it pass the test?
6. Is it more than I'll spend on skiing, games, boating, vacation, and self-entertainment?
7. Could the world look at it and determine by it that I'm truly one of Christ's disciples?
8. Does it reflect my concern for world missions?

The Great Giving Spirit

Three persons watched the offering plate being passed.

One said, "There goes some of my hard earned money."

The second said, "It's my duty to give something to my church."

The third said, "What a privilege it is to support the building of God's kingdom."

What do you say when the plate comes to you?

Answering Your Questions

Henry Feyerabend

Q

The Bible, at least sometimes, recommends the use of intoxicating liquor. If this is not the case, what is meant by the verses in Proverbs 31:6, 7?

A

Here is how the text in question reads:

"Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy heart. Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more" (Proverbs 31:6, 7, KJV).

Should someone desire to use this text as a pretext to drink alcoholic beverages, he would have to meet one of two conditions in order to qualify:

1. He would have to be in the last stages of a terminal illness, with no modern medical help, and no medication to relieve the pain.

2. He would have to be a manic depressive with no psychiatric help, no medication, and no Christian counselling.

The entire section from verses 1 to 9 is a protest against kings and persons in responsibility using strong drink. The warning is:

... it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink: Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted. (Verses 4, 5)

The chapter urges the king's attention to the cause of the poor and needy. Instead of encouraging the use of alcohol, the inspired writer is saying that it should be renounced by people in health and strength. The strong drink was to be reserved only for use as a medicine, for someone who is terminally ill, "ready to perish," especially in Bible times when there were no pain-killing drugs. It was also used for the manic depressive. The Bible teaches that it should be renounced by people in health and strength and prosperity.

Henry Feyerabend is the speaker of the "It is Written" telecast for Canada and evangelist for the North American Division working in connection with the Media Center evangelistic program.

Send us your church administration and theology related questions. In this column the ED will answer as many of them as space permits.

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Woodrow W. Whidden II

Ellen White on Salvation

Ellen White on Salvation

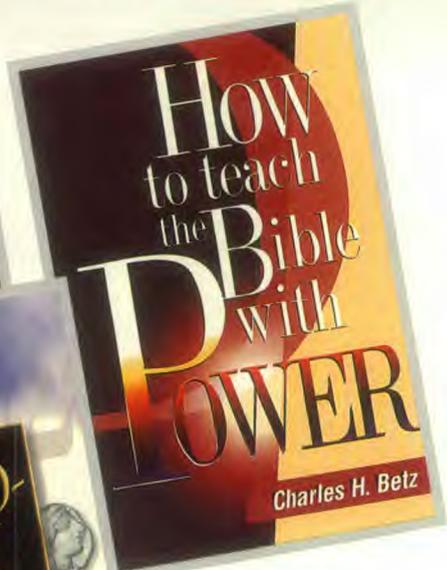
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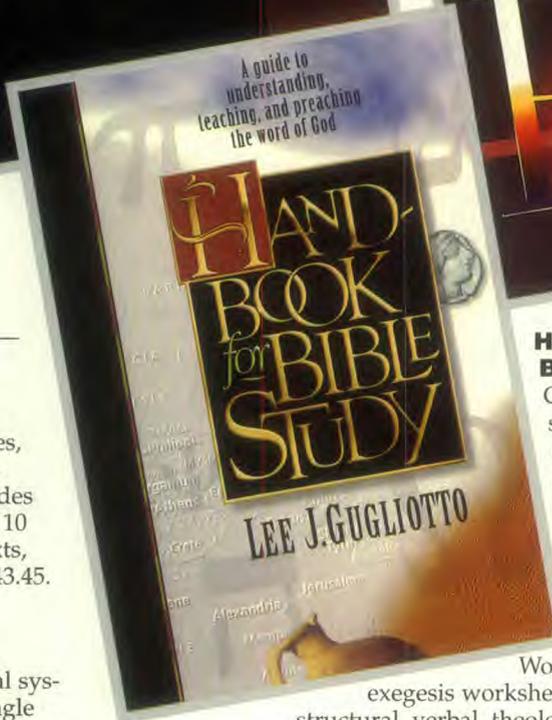


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