

# Caribbean Union Conference

## Stewardship Week 2009



## THEME: "Lifestyle Issues in Christian Stewardship"

December 5-12, 2009

**SERMON TOPICS**  
**STEWARDSHIP WEEK**

December 5 – 12, 2009

**THEME: Lifestyle Issues in Christian Stewardship**

Sabbath, Dec.	5	The Steward's Lifestyle: Dictated by the Word
Sunday, Dec.	6	Growing Your Money
Monday, Dec.	7	Who Cares? Environmental Issues and the Christian
Tuesday, Dec.	8	Making Family a Positive Stewardship Witness
Wed'day, Dec.	9	The Christian and His Relation to Debt
Thursday, Dec	10	(Select a reading from <i>Counsels on Stewardship</i> )
Friday, Dec.	11	Stewardship: A Lifestyle Walk With God
Sabbath, Dec.	12	I Return My Life Through Giving

# **The Steward's Lifestyle: Dictated by the Word**

by Pastor James Daniel

Growing up, as a kid, I enjoyed sweet biscuits, particularly Shirley biscuits. I would eat them every day, if I could. The problem was, though they tasted good, they did not provide me with any long-term nutritional value.

That is the heart of the problem with Christians who are trading substance for succulence in their neglect of God's Word. Our preference is to feed on the non-nutritious substitutes at the expense of spirituality. We feast regularly on secular activities and on things we can see and touch at the expense of the powerful, transforming truth of the Scripture.

In 1970, James Smart wrote a little book entitled "*The Strange Silence of the Bible in the Church.*" In it he convincingly argued that the Scriptures were falling silent in the teaching and preaching of the church and in the consciousness of the people in the pews. Forty years ago – back in what some see as the glory days of the church – vast sections of the Christian faith had already stopped listening to Jesus. Sermons largely ignored the biblical text. Bible studies virtually disappeared as fewer and fewer of the faithful attended. Now, 40 years later, not a lot has changed. Today, studies show that biblical illiteracy is high -- that many churchgoers reared in modern church programmes lack even a basic knowledge of the Scriptures. The Bible remains silent; and Jesus with it.

## **POWERLESS WHILE HOLDING THE POWER**

For too many Christians the Bible is a great show piece under their arms or on their desk and table; but the sad truth is, it occupies a very insignificant and unproductive place in their lives, even though we have been called to be Stewards of the Word. How else can we explain the seeming lack of power, lack of victory, scarcity of testimony, and the weak impact of God's people on the world? There is a serious disconnect between the power of the inerrant Word of God and the powerlessness of God's people.

This disconnect exists because so many of us Christians have become secularised in our outlook. We now rely more on the opinions of others, depend on popular human philosophies, concepts and gimmicks to address the needs in our lives, rather than living with confidence in the sufficiency and authority of Scripture. More and more people are turning to Bible "supplements" to fix emotional, relational, psychological, financial, and spiritual issues they face. They don't need the whole, authoritative Word of God, they simply settle for the supplements. Some of our preaching is responsible. Like Shirley Biscuits the preaching goes down sweet because it is coated with sugar, but it has very little real benefit.

Because we are not feeding on the Word, our spiritual malnutrition is obvious to the watching world, if not to ourselves.

But there is hope. The Word of God has lost none of its power or ability to feed us on pure spiritual truth. In this time of famine for the Word of God, as prophesied by the prophet **Amos** (8:11), let us "Follow the Bible" and be feast on the Word of God.

## **PEOPLE OF THE BOOK**

Our earliest youth periodical, *The Youth's Instructor*, contained articles of theological depth and import rarely seen in any of our current papers for youth or adults. Today, Sabbath School Bible study guides, magazines, books, and even books by Ellen White continue to be

reformatted and rewritten in hopes of appealing to a generation of Seventh-day Adventists who do not read and converse as proficiently and studiously as they should.

Adventists in general, and our youth in particular, are becoming less spiritually studious and thus more vulnerable to Satan's deceptive power. If we are to finish the work and stand firm against evil in these closing days of history, we must reclaim the distinction of being "people of the Book;" people whose lifestyle is dictated by the Word of God.

The writer of Hebrews even expressed frustration with Christians who had not advanced to more mature thinking. In the midst of a discussion of the nature of Christ, which is still a contentious issue within Adventism, Paul wrote: "We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish the good from the evil" (Hebrews 5:11-14).

Jesus' primary warning to His people living just prior to His return was not about war, natural disasters, economic instability, or even religious and political persecution. Jesus simply said, "Watch out that no one deceives you" (Matthew 24:4, 5). Since the beginning of the world, deception has proven to be Satan's only successful weapon against God's people. In fact, his introductory conversation with humanity opened with the cunning question "Did God really say . . . ?" (Genesis 3:1).

With this same approach he assailed Jesus in the wilderness, only to be repelled by the single sure defence against the devil's schemes: "It is written" (Matthew 4:4). On this point, Ellen White counselled: "The reason why the youth, and even those of mature years, are so easily led into temptation and sin is that they do not study the Word of God and meditate upon it as they should. . . . If the Word of God were appreciated as it should be, both young and old would possess an inward rectitude, a strength of principle, that would enable them to resist temptation." *The Ministry of Healing*, pages 458, 459.

Concerning the commands of the Lord, Moses instructed Israel to "impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up" (Deuteronomy 6:7). A lifestyle dictated by the Word of God does not come about by chance but by effort and determination.

Secondly, if we are to avoid deception we must take the Word of God as it is, and reject skepticism. The last book of the Bible records that God is particular about what is written in the Scriptures. He pronounces severe, eternal punishment on anyone who adds or takes away from His Word. Let's read it: **Revelation 22:18, 19**.

**Illustration:** Nine-year-old Danny came bursting out of Sunday school like a wild stallion. His eyes were darting in every direction as he tried to locate either mom or dad. Finally, after a quick search, he grabbed his Daddy by the leg and yelled, "Man, that story of Moses and all those people crossing the Red Sea was great!" His father looked down, smiled, and asked the boy to tell him about it.

"Well, the Israelites got out of Egypt, but Pharaoh and his army chased after them. So the Jews ran as fast as they could until they got to the Red Sea. The Egyptian Army was gettin' closer and closer. So Moses got on his walkie-talkie and told the Israeli Air Force to bomb the Egyptians. While that was happening, the Israeli Navy built a pontoon bridge so the people could cross over. They made it!"

By now dad was in shock. "Is THAT the way they taught you the story?" Dad asked. Well, no, not exactly," Danny admitted, "but if I told you the way they told it to us, you'd never believe it, Dad."

With childlike innocence the little boy put his finger on the pulse of our sophisticated adult world where cool skepticism reigns supreme. It's becoming increasingly more popular to operate in the black-and-white world of facts, and, of course, to leave no space for the miraculous. Let us accept and follow the God's amazing Word.

Thirdly, we must study the Bible by realizing that its message was meant for us. Yes, the Word from God is meant for all people, but we must personalize it by realizing that God intended the message be for us as individuals. Consider the words of the Psalmist David when he writes in Psalm 119:105 – "Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path." We find it much easier to think that the Word of God was written for everyone but us. God's plan is that we live lives dictated by His Word.

### **ALIVE BY THE WORD**

God's Word is alive. That means that it is more than words on a page, these words have God's authority and power and strength behind them and God will make them come to pass. It means that God's Word produces fruit when it enters into your heart and mind, it will change your life. **1 Peter 1:23** says it this way: "*Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.*"

When the Word of God acts, God acts. When the Word of God delivers, God delivers. When the Word of God heals, God heals. God and His Word are one. **Hebrews 4:12-13** tell us three things the Word of God does, when you read it, believe it and obey it: "*For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.*"

The moment the Word of God starts to penetrate into your heart and mind, Satan immediately works to try and neutralize the effect of the Word of God. First, he will work to keep you from reading the Word. But if he can't do that, he will try to distract you so that you do not read with comprehension. He will get you distracted but if he can't get you that way then he will try to bring doubt to what you are reading. He will do all and whatever he can every time to neutralize and stop the Word of God from doing the surgery that God wants it to do in our lives.

The Word of God speaks to you when you read it; and if it is in your heart and mind it tells you when you have done that which is displeasing to the Lord and failed to live up to, and by His standards, which is His Word. Scripture says you will hear a voice behind you saying, "this is the way. . ." (Isaiah 30:21).

God loves us; and we must show that we love Him in return.

**Illustration.** A husband writes a letter to his wife. She then tells herself, well, I love my husband, but I don't want to bother to read his letter. Would we not consider that inconsistent and not the action of one who really loves her husband? Is it any different if we say that we Love God but not enough to read His letter to us and hear His instructions for us and know His will for our lives? If you are not interested in His Word or in knowing Him when the only way to know Him is through His Word, then what kind of love is that? But we have this problem. We don't want to read that which we think will expose our sin and bring conviction.

So we don't consider it important enough. If you really love someone though, even if reading that which they have written makes us feel uneasy, we will read it anyway because of love.

**Story:** I remember reading a Peanuts cartoon strip in which Lucy comes up to Charlie Brown and does something that is very unusual for her. She says, "I love you." But Charlie Brown keeps responding by saying, "No, you don't." And each time Lucy answers a little louder, "Yes I do, I really love you." But Charlie Brown has been rejected so many times he keeps saying, "It can't be true." So in the last square, Lucy has reached the limit of her patience and she screams out in a loud voice, "Hey stupid, I love you!"

I wonder if God has to do that with us sometimes. I mean, what does it take to get through? Does He have to yell out: "Hey blockhead, I love you?" Can't you see that God will literally turn this world upside down in his search for one human soul? Maybe you fell like God has been turning your world upside down a little bit lately. Well, that's love at work. And the supreme sign of that love is the gift of Christ Jesus.

## **CONCLUSION**

God has a guaranteed transformation in store for you. And it doesn't require nonstop religious activity or willpower made of steel. All it takes is your willing heart. Forget trying to grind out the Christian life. Learn instead about the extreme makeover God has in mind for you, and the wise and loving way He will make it happen. Life will never be the same when you're *a whole new you!*

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## **Growing Your Money: The Need to Make Investments**

By Pastor George McCallum

God being the source of man's inheritance expects improvement on that which is entrusted to us. Suitable areas of investments for significant growth becomes the responsibility of the steward (Matthew 25:14-21; Psalm 24). The returns belong to the Lord. Of this He gives man nine-tenth and ask for one-tenth in remembrance of His lordship.

Its not just the amount of money you earned that matters; rather, it is maintaining good health, in the process of earning, the ability to grow that money so that its value can stand the test of inflation, devaluation and the passing of time. Therefore, the surest way to grow your money is not to stock pile cash, but to invest it. The significance of the widow's mites was not calculated by the immediate value, but rather by the source of her investment ( Luke 21:1-3).

Investment may be seen as making a profit or taking advantage of your resource opportunities, or using your money to make favourable returns. It is less likely that most working class persons will be able to save enough money in the bank form salary to take care of future needs, including buying a house and educating their children during their active years of service. Hence, the need to make wise investments. Since one spent the active years of life earning money it should not be difficult to understand life as synonymous to money and time. So, to invest ones money is to invest your actives years of life and time, watch it grow to the advantage of your inactive years.

Today we are going to be looking at making investments as a means of growing your money. We are not going to be looking at this topic in isolation instead we are going to look at making investments in 3 ways.

- a. Making an investment in your health
- b. Making investments for the long term
- c. Making investments in your family.

### **HEALTH**

Invest your money in good health. Develop the habit of a healthy life style. "In order to live a life to the fullest and serve God faithfully, we need a balance of healthful practices in our lives—fresh air, sunlight, moderation, rest, exercise, proper diet, pure water outside and outside, confidence in His power—all of these are remedies for optimum health (*Ministry of Healing, p. 128*).

There are many who exchange good health for activities and habits with high diminishing returns. Any life style which depletes instead of enhancing good health is not worth it, even if it brings fame, popularity and wealth. For what does it profit a man to have great gains if he cannot enjoy it in good health? Very few things on this earth can be more gratifying than a sound mind in a healthy body.

According to one Arab proverb, he who has health has hope and he who has hope has everything. The apostle places good health in the highest category of physical and spiritual prosperity: "Dear friend I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well" (**3 John 2 NIV**).

On many occasions Paul exhorts us to glorify God in our body (1 Cor 10:30). This he declares is the temple where God dwells. (1Cor 3:16; 6: 19; 2 Cor6: 16). It therefore means that in our every behavior and attitude God should be worshipped.

However, soon after creation man lost his direction to true worship, and so was the receipt for good health. Hence, the ministry of Jesus was largely taken up in healing the physically sick, earning Him the title, “great physician.” In the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, Volume 8, page 745 it is said that of the thirty five recorded miracles, twenty three were healing. Jesus demonstrates that healthy mind and body predicate both a longer active life span and a healthier relationship with God.

## **REAL ESTATE**

Invest your money in Real Estate and other long term investment. In delivering the children of Israel out of slavery one of the promises they received was real estate in Canaan: “ You must keep this ordinance at the appointed time year after year. After the Lord brings you into the lands of the Canaanites and give it to you, as He promised on oath to you and your forefathers (Exodus 13:10, 11 NIV). On their arrival God fulfilled His promise (Joshua 13-24).

One of, if not the most dignified and comfortable way to live is on your own property. There is no doubt that many persons may have to start life living with relatives or in a rented house, nothing is wrong with that. However, your first and foremost objective should be to own your piece of real estate. Ellen G. White shares this piece of advice on real estate:

*“Brother and Sister B have not learnt the lesson of economy. . . . They would use all as they pass along, were it ever so much. They would enjoy as they go and then, when affliction draws upon them, would be wholly unprepared . . . . Had Brother and Sister B been economical managers, denying themselves, they could ere this have had a home of their own and besides have had means to draw upon in case of adversity. But they will not economize as others have done, upon whom they have sometimes been dependent” (Adventist Home, p. 395).*

Investment is a sacrifice. I repeat, investment takes sacrifice and unless you make a conscious decision to invest you will always have other “things” you need to do with your money. Now when I speak of things, I am referring to flashy cars, with the big rims and big radio set that some young men like. Or shoes, clothes, bags and hats for the ladies. For others, “things” could be furniture, electrical gadgets or expensive toys. Now don’t get me wrong there is nothing inherently wrong with “things” but if you are not careful these perishable assets might lead you off course in your life and unprepared for the future.

Consider the counsel of Proverbs 6:6-8. why doesn’t the ant eat all it collects in the times of plenty? It’s because there is a time of scarcity coming so it needs to prepare. Similarly, while it is ok to enjoy the fruits of your labour by buying perishable assets, it is essential to prepare for the future scarcity which will inevitably affect every life. Scarcity may come in the form of sickness, a family emergency or unexpected unemployment. If you are not well prepared for these situations the ‘things’ you have can’t help you through. You need to draw on your investments.

When investing in real estate or any other long term investment such as stocks, bonds and mutual funds you must always have a plan and know your situation.

Two popular questions when it comes to making investments are:

1. When is the best time to start my investments?
2. How much do I need to start?

An illustration given by Elder Terry Williams, AY leader of the East Point seventh-day Adventist Church helps address these two questions.

Consider the situation of the triplets Dario, Damian and Dawn.

Dario had summer jobs from the time he was 15 and managed to save \$1,000 a year. He invests his money in the stock exchange with average returns of 11% per year. He is disciplined by nature and he consistently invests \$1,000 each year until he reaches the age of 65.

Damian also worked during the summer from the time he was 15. Like his brother, he saves \$1,000 a year. He invests his money in the stock exchange with average returns of 11% per year. He does this for 10 years until he reaches finishes university at age 25, he decides to breakout of his savings shell and live-it-up by partying and travelling

Dawn on the other hand a summer jobs. She parties and travels from the time she is 18. She is always in fashion buying all the latest designer clothes. At 40 their parents retire with only an NIS pension. This “freaks” her out and she puts away \$10,000 per year for 25 years when she retires.

Of the triplets who do you think retires with the most money?

Dario would have approximately \$1.6 million at retirement

Damian would have blown his investment.

Dawn would receive just under 1 million at retirement

Surprised? The Best time to start making investments is NOW. Furthermore, you don't have to begin investing with large lump sums; all you need to do is to be consistent over time.

## **INVEST YOUR MONEY IN YOUR FAMILY**

Invest in the future of the family. In addition to making long term investment in real estate, for the good of the family, proper money management, education, and quality time are also important.

Terry and Trizanna just had their first child Robyn. Terry, being a wise investor will start a regular investment plan for Robyn right now. By the time Robyn reaches university age that money will grow significantly opening up opportunities to her which probably might be impossible if they had to come up with that money all at once. However, it would be unwise of him not to teach her proper money management.

Lord Chesterfield once said *“Knowledge is a comfortable and necessary retreat and shelter for us in advanced age; and if we do not plant it while young, it will give us no shade when we grow old”*.

It behooves parents to teach children the value of money and the art of investments using object lessons and practical experiences from early. For example, Help them to understand mutual funds, bonds, stocks etc. from early, but also, where possible, show your child how to plant a grain of corn, let both parents and child watch that grain grows into ears of corn. Nature teaches more than it preaches.

Teach them the danger of unnecessary debts and Above all, educate your children of their financial obligation to God and man by precepts and example. For instance, as far as is possible, no child should attend a church service that calls for worship through monetary offering, without that offering if it is possible to do so.

Give them allowances and teach them to return tithe and offering, and save from their own allowances. Show them how to plan and purchase important items for themselves from their

savings. Every child should be taught from early that God is the source of the money they earned or possessed. that they are in possession to assist the less fortunate.

**Invest in your child' formal education.** Benjamin Franklin said: "If a man empties his purse into his head. No man can take it away from him. An investment in knowledge always pay the best interest". There is little or no risk in investing your life's earnings and time in your child's education,

## **CONCLUSION**

If God sees it fitting to remind the church through you that the time has come for practical religion, don't leave the church. God could be saying to your church through you, start investing amongst yourselves. Can leadership identify a health insurance policy for the members? Is it a difficult task and risky business for a local church to purchase lands and sell it in manageable small parcels? Is a risky endeavour for a local church to establish an education fund to guarantee Christian education for our young people? These are some of my questions, what are your answers?

If the church must survive in these last days there must be a communal spirit strong enough to sacrifice laziness, selfishness and apathy. The time has come for the rich to say, "I am poor;" and the poor to say, "I am rich;" for the strong to say, "I am weak;" and the weak to say, "I am strong," because of what the Lord has done for us. I would like to challenge leaders, including myself, to step up to the task of revolutionizing Stewardship in the churches so that our numbers can work for their God. Every body can invest something.

It is my hope that with all the academic ramifications, business principles, financial denition and risk managements concerning investments, that the real need for investments amongst God's people will be Christ centered, people focused objective of spending eternity with our family and friends in mansions prepared for us, build by God Himself.

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## **WHO CARES?**

### **Environmental Ethics and the Christian**

by Joann Davidson

Environmental issues are attracting more and more attention. Deliberation, however, often remains focused on human life. Western thinking has valued primarily—if not exclusively—human life. Arguments for nonhuman life rest on their contribution to humanity.

More recently, there has been an effort to extend moral thinking beyond human beings. Moral philosopher Tom Regan argues that any being that has an emotional and perceptual life, including pain and pleasure preferences, plus the ability to pursue actions and goals with a significant degree of independence, should be included within one's moral horizon.

Environmental ethics now defends the inclusion of large communities of animals, plants, rivers, lakes, mountains, and valleys, referred to as ecosystems, "biomes," or "the natural environment." Ecosystems are associations of species, from microbes in the soil to forests and animals that live together in countless numbers as citizens in a community. Ecosystems are not alive, but they resemble living things closely enough to allow for some valid comparisons. For example, ecosystems can be ill or well, assessed by diagnostic tests that resemble medical examinations, including monitoring "vital signs" and identifying "risk factors."

#### **ADVENTISTS AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

Though slow to defend the environment, Seventh-day Adventists believe that the world has exalted standing from its divinely created status, and that the scriptural assignment of dominion is a stewardship ethic. From the first chapter of Genesis to the end of the book of Revelation one finds an impressive doctrine of life.

In the opening chapter of Genesis, as God creates, each day He exclaims "good" or "very good." Both animals and human beings were created by God from the "dust of the ground" and given the "breath of life" (Gen. 2:7, 19\*) and identical blessings (Gen. 1:22, 28). This implies, at the very least, divine appreciation of them all. Humans and animals are given a vegetarian diet (Gen. 1:29, 30). The subsequent Fall also affects all creation (Gen. 3:14-19).

Later, Noah is told by God to take his family and animals into the ark "to keep their kind alive on the face of all the earth" during a global catastrophe (Gen. 7:3, NRSV†). In the midst of the deluge "God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and all the domestic animals that were with him in the ark" (Gen. 8:1, NRSV). After exiting the ark the animals are explicitly included in the divine covenant: "Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying: ' . . . Behold, I establish My covenant with you and with your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you'" (Gen. 9:8-10; cf. Gen. 9:12, 15, 17).

Later the children of Israel are led to the Promised Land and carefully instructed on creation care. They had an obligation to be kind to their animals: one must help a donkey when it has fallen under a heavy load, even if the animal belongs to an enemy (Ex. 23:4, 5; Deut. 22:1-4); large work animals were not to be muzzled while working, that way they could eat while doing the heavy work involved in agriculture and enjoy the harvest they were helping to reap (Deut. 25:4).

The Mosaic laws include the protection of nature, outlawing destruction of fruit trees to aid a military campaign (Deut. 20:19). Humans and animals along with the land are included in the

stipulations for the weekly Sabbath and the sabbatic year (Ex. 23:10-12, cf. Ex. 20:8-11; Lev. 25:6, 7; Deut. 5:12-15).

God's providence for all life inspired many of the prayers and hymns in the Psalter, expressing how this reveals God's glory (see Ps. 148:7-13). The wisdom books invite appreciation for nonhuman life: "Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise" (Prov. 6:6).

The prophets instruct that if God's covenant is broken and the responsibilities of stewardship are neglected, deterioration and pollution of the earth will be the result (Isa. 24:4-6). Again and again God laments the broken ecosystems of creation, repeatedly reminding that His concern includes all the created order (see Hosea 4:1-3; Joel 1:15-20; Zech. 7:8-14; 11:1-3).

Hosea promises that ultimately the original perfection of creation will be restored (Hosea 2:18). Within the promises of the final removal of sin and the restoration of Eden perfection, the animal kingdom is pointedly included: "The wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little boy will lead them. . . . They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain" (Isa. 11:6-9, NASB<sup>†</sup>).

## **IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**

This "theology of life" is found also in the New Testament. Jesus speaks of His affection for animals, stressing that even the lowliest of creatures is loved: "Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten in God's sight" (Luke 12:6, NRSV).

Jesus illustrated an essential environmental lesson when, after miraculously feeding thousands with five loaves and two small fish, He commanded that all leftovers be carefully gathered up "so that nothing is lost" (John 6:12).

In the final book of Scripture, the entire created world is dramatically encompassed with divine judgment (Rev. 7:1-3). After the seventh trumpet sounds in Revelation 11, the 24 elders cry out against those who have wreaked havoc on creation: "You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints . . . and should destroy those who destroy the earth" (Rev. 11:18).

The Apocalypse concludes with the resplendent restoration that Old Testament prophets promised earlier, reminding again that redemption involves the renewal of God's original creation. Throughout Scripture we are never allowed to forget the profound value that God places on creation.

## **WHAT DO OTHERS THINK?**

Environmentalists outside the Christian tradition often have been unsuccessful in arguing for such high worth. Secular materialists believe the world unfolds in an endless process. Pantheists suggest God is eternally emanating with this world. Atheists think the world evolved out of matter by chance. New Agers worship the earth as divine. Buddhists and Christian Scientists believe the world is an illusion.<sup>4</sup> By contrast, Adventists believe God created this world with lavish care, declaring it "very good" (Gen. 1:31), and ever since is a concerned "landlord."

Only in the twentieth century did environmental thinking slowly begin to broaden beyond human concerns. Biblical writers express concern for creation much earlier. Creation and Christianity have one God. Thereby it should not be surprising that environmental issues are embedded in Scripture.

### **CRUELTY TO ANIMALS**

These are but a few of the serious ecological issues related to the meat industry, let alone the frightful cruelty to animals involved, including the transport to slaughter and the horrifying slaughtering process itself. Common practices certainly do not model the biblical directive for a quick and painless slaughter out of respect for the animal. Very few have any conception of the violence and brutality that are inflicted on animals in order to gratify a carnivorous diet.

Furthermore, many animals display high intelligence. They see, hear, love, fear, and suffer. They manifest sympathy and tenderness toward their companions in suffering. Many animals show an affection for those who care for them far superior to that exhibited by humans.

### **CONCLUSION: PERFECTION RESTORED**

Isaiah reminds us that the original diet of Eden will be restored in the new earth (Isa. 11:9), but even now we can live within these beneficent principles, appreciatively caring for the created world we share with all life. Christians don't even have to solve the debate on global warming. Scriptural motives for creation care, grounded in thankfulness for the divine gift of life in all its forms, are far advanced of contemporary environmental ethics. Creation care isn't just good stewardship; it is being everything God hoped we would be. Instead of being human-centred, animal-centred, or environmentally-centred, we will be divinely-centred, singing the doxology with that vast creation chorus: "Praise Him all creatures here below."

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by Pastor Ein Kirk

## **INTRODUCTION**

Gen: 12:2-8 “And I will make of thee a great nation....”

**STORY:** During my teenage years on a hot summer evening my brother and I were walking home after a hard day’s work. We were dressed alike; we were almost the same height and size. He looked at me and said: “Ein, we are looking like brothers.” Maybe he meant that we were looking like twins. However he was correct because family members should have a resemblance and live in oneness for the glory of God.

For the purpose of our discussion, we will view the family as *a dynamic circle of relatives and friends who are bonding together by ties of love, law, blood and common goals for mutual caring and the fulfillment of specific developmental tasks and functions. In the following sections we will look at the three common goals which can help a family to be a positive stewardship witness in their community.* The goals are: (1) To learn how to love alike; (2) Learn to live alike; and (3) How to know when the family is energized alike by the Holy Spirit.

## **HOW CAN A FAMILY LEARN TO LOVE ALIKE**

In Genesis 12: 2-8, God made a promise of blessing to Abraham, and of blessings that would come through Abraham. God’s blessings on Abraham were connected with his devotion to God and his leadership in his family. In every place Abraham lived he built an altar. Each family should have a family altar for morning and evening worship. This is one of the secrets for receiving God’s blessings, and of learning to love alike.

*Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 5* states that the youth (family) who shows respect for holy things, learn these lessons under the home roof. . . . Love to God is learned at the family altar (page 416). When families learn to love at the family altar, they will learn to love alike in the home and the community. Love is a positive emotion and a divine principle which exists between two or more persons who are bonding together by ties of devotion, caring, loyalty, goodwill for each other and the fulfillment of personal needs. The little chorus says that “Love is something if you give away it will come right back to you.” but it must first begin at the family altar. A family can learn how to love alike at the family altar. When we have learnt how to love alike it becomes very easy to learn how to live alike.

## **HOW CAN A FAMILY LEARN TO LIVE ALIKE?**

**STORY:** A story is told of a rich man who planned to go away from his property for a long time. Before leaving, he called three of his servants and gave them some of his property to manage for him. The work of these three servants was the same, because they became stewards for the same master.

According to the book, *Seventh-day Adventists Belief*, page 302: “A steward is a person entrusted with the management of the estate of another.” Hence the focus of a steward is to manage his master’s estate, to bring joy or satisfaction to his master. Therefore the three servants were expected to live alike in the management of their master’s estate. This earth is a part of God’s estate. In Genesis 1:28 He gave to the first family the privilege to manage it for Him. We are the descendants of the first family; therefore we have the same privilege

and responsibility toward God. Hence stewardship is the management of God's estate to bring joy and satisfaction to Him. *1 Corinthians 10:31* says it this way, "do all to the glory of God."

We must live alike for the glory of God. God has promised some reward for families who live alike for his glory. In *Colossians 3:23, 24* it says that whatever we do, we must do it heartily as to the Lord, knowing that of the Lord, we shall receive the reward of the inheritance. There are two words in this passage which hold the key for families to learn how to live alike. The first word is HEARTILY. This word is rooted in two words--origin and spirit. The original spirit or the spirit of origin is the Holy Spirit. It is only through the Holy Spirit that we can learn to live alike or be like Jesus, to glorify Him.

The second word is INHERITANCE. The word comes from three root words: break, possession and law. It means to share possessions by law, formula, or prescription. God has given us some incentives to live alike in the form of pre-set formula and the energizing power of the Holy Spirit. Some of these pre-set formulas can be summarized in the acronym GOSPEL:

- G - God's good news for everlasting life (John 3:16)
- O - Offering and Tithes for unlimited blessings (Mal. 3:8-10)
- S - Saving for heaven (Matt. 6:20, 21)
- P - Property multiplication and inheritance for eternity (Matt. 19:29)
- E - Earth's resources for preservation and incentive (Rev. 11:18)
- L - Legacy at death (Luke 12: 20, 21, Matt. 16: 24-27)

### **ENERGISED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT**

When we accept our stewardship responsibilities and learn God's pre-set formulas, we will live alike for the glory of God, energized by the Holy Spirit. Look at the following 7 signs which indicate when the family is being energized alike (together) by the Holy Spirit:

1. The family will be sanctified (2Thess. 2:12).
2. The family will exhibit the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5: 22).
3. Each member will be changed into the image of Christ (2Cor 3:18).
4. Self will be crucified and Christ will be glorified (Gal. 2:20).
5. The family will love and live alike through the spirit (Rom. 8: 9-11).
6. The family will be guided by the Spirit (John 16:13).
7. The family will be devoted to positive stewardship witnessing Christ (Acts 1:8).

Guided by the Spirit of God families can love alike and live alike and be positive stewardship witnesses in their community.

### **CONCLUSION AND APPEAL**

Are you being energized by the Holy Spirit? Will you allow the Holy Spirit to empower you to love alike and live alike for the glory of God? Accept your Stewardship responsibility today.

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. What does it mean to love alike? Where can it be learnt?
2. How does God help us to live alike?
3. How can we know when we are being energized by the Holy Spirit?

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**THE CHRISTIN AND HIS RELATION TO DEBT**

by Pastor Teelbany Singh

There is no question that we are living in a very materialistic, money-oriented society. Men and women place a high priority on possessions, earning power, and a lifestyle of financial success. It seems we are living a life of greed rather than need. Those who cannot afford to live as they would like to will borrow and go into debt to secure the things that they feel they must have.

**Let's take a look at the problems that debt can lead to.** A husband and wife who are both working can bring in a relatively large income. Often they will begin purchasing items to go with their lifestyle. Problems develop when circumstances change. A pregnancy may render the wife unable to work; the termination of one partner, or worse, both. And suddenly the family's financial situation will change. These changes can bring added stress to the family. In fact, many divorced couples admit that financial management or mismanagement were a major cause of the dissolution of their marriage.

### **INSPIRATION AND THE ISSUE OF DEBT**

The wise man Solomon says: "The rich rules over the poor and the borrower is servant [slave] to the lender" (Proverbs 22:7). Therefore, as long as you are living in debt you are living in slavery. The Patriarch Moses says, however, "that if we hearken diligently to the voice of the Lord our God and keep His Commandments then all His blessings will come upon us" (Deuteronomy 28:1, 2). He emphasizes the point of debt-free living when he said: The Lord will open the heavens, the storehouse of His bounty, to send rain on your land in season, and to bless all the work of your hands. You will lend to many nations but will borrow from none (Deuteronomy 28:12).

Ellen White, while writing to a man in debt, said: "This has been the curse of your life, getting into debt. Avoid it as you would the smallpox" (*The Adventist Home*, p. 393). In her day one of the worst diseases you could get was smallpox. If you did come down with it, the result was almost always death. What disease would she have compared debt to today? AIDS? The point is, we should avoid debt like the plague it is.

"When one becomes involved in debt, he is in one of Satan's nets, which he sets. . . . Deny yourself a thousand things rather than run into debt," says the pen of inspiration (*Adventist Home*, pp. 392, 393).

### **THE MAIN CAUSES OF DEBT**

It is suggested that the main causes of debt are (1) discontent, and (2) greed. We have come to an age of instant gratification. One senior person said to me recently, that during her youth they were not privileged to have many of the things that we now have in our homes, for two reasons: First, many of the gadgets we now take for granted were not available then; and secondly, credit was not so easily available. That home-maker had to sacrifice and save until she and her family could buy their items, cash.

There are, unfortunately, among the people of God those who have not yet overcome covetousness, and are in a mad rush to keep up with the "Joneses" and the "Smiths." To these I sound the warning--"IMAGE has a high price tag." If you are therefore working for Flintstone salaries do not try to live the Jetson's lifestyle.

### **HOW TO ELIMINATE DEBT**

Surely by now you realize that debt is bad. Now, here comes the good news. I believe that it is possible for almost any person, if they really want to, to get out of debt. The plan is simple and straight-forward. It is made up of four basic steps.

**Step One:**

Make a commitment to be faithful to God with an honest tithe and a free-will offering. This step will enable you to access God's wisdom and blessing. (see Proverbs 3; Deuteronomy 28; Malachi 3; Matthew 6 and Matthew 25).

**Step Two:**

*Declare an immediate moratorium on additional debt.* No more credit spending. Be aware that if you do not borrow, you do not owe. If you do not borrow any more money, you would not be further in debt. The best time to make such a commitment is right now. There are too many who are planning to, hoping to, wishing to, going to, but never do. Stop thinking about consequences and start today. No more debt!

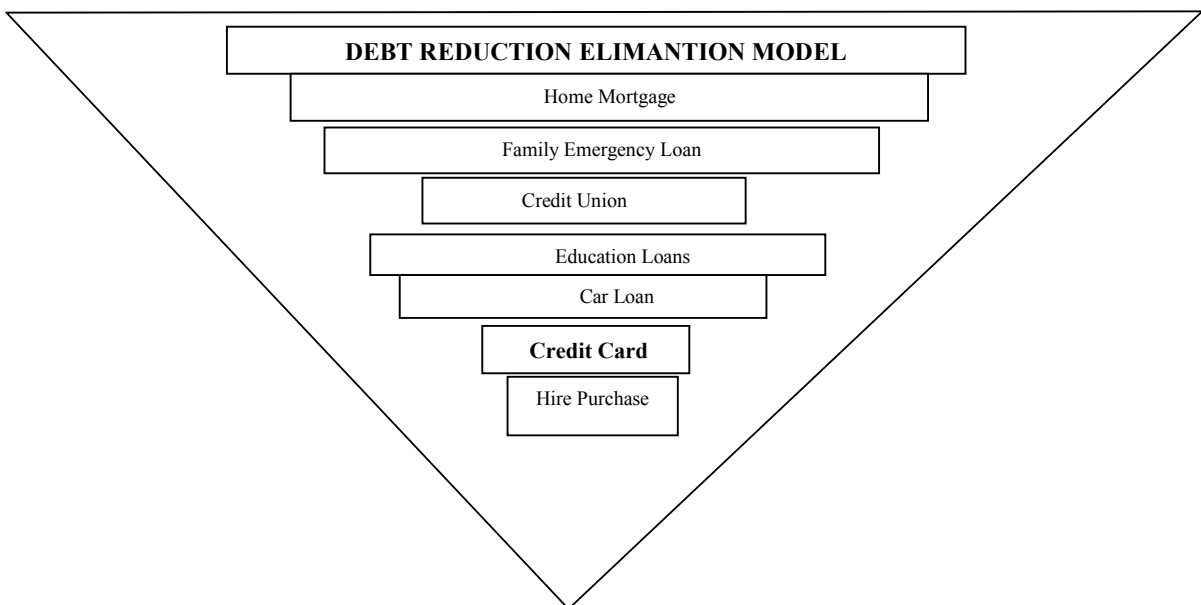
**Step Three:**

*Make a covenant with God: From this point on, as He blesses me I will pay off my debts as soon as possible.* It is smart to set a target date for being debt-free, and work towards your deadlines. As God blesses you with additional finances--such as Bonus, Tax-return, Commission etc--use such to reduce your debt. Do not purchase more things.

This step is probably the most critical. The reason is that when most people acquire unexpected money, they simple spend it. Or use it as a down payment on another purchase and thereby go even further into debt. If you have made the covenant (promise or agreement with God, then you will know what to do with the extra money. You will apply it to your debt-reduction plan.

**Step Four:**

*Make a list of all your debts from the largest to the smallest in descending order.* Make that list as follows:



Begin by making at least the minimum payment due on each of your debt, on a monthly basis. Next, increase as best as you can your payments on the item on the bottom of the list.

Then take the money that you were paying on the bottom item, and add it to the basic payment on the item listed next. As you eliminate your smaller high-interest debts, you will free up money to place on the next level.

By starting at the bottom of the list, you will have many occasions to praise God for His blessings. Take a moment to celebrate each success by giving God thanks for the freedom you are beginning to experience.

When you reach the home mortgage debt at the top of the list, you will be able to employ the money that you once spent on other things to make regular additional payments on the principal, thereby reducing the length of your home loan by several months or even years.

### **CONCLUSION**

God never intended His children to live under the yoke of debt. Unfortunately many have not educated themselves in regard to how they can keep their expenditure in line with their income. This situation has led many to resort to borrowing in an attempt to make ends meet, and thus end up in overwhelming debt. If you are one of them then there is hope for you. By following these four simple steps, many families have become debt-free. You can too!

Let God into your financial affairs by putting God first. Put your life in His hands and you will receive His wisdom and blessings for managing what He has entrusted to you. And that will make you happy. God Bless you.

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## **STEWARDSHIP: A LIFE STYLE WALK WITH GOD**

by Pastor Phillip Bowman

“Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold, but let God remold your minds from within so that you may prove in practice that the plan of God for you is good, meets all His demands and moves towards the goal of true maturity.” *Romans 12:2* (J.B Phillips Translation).

More than 60 years ago two well-known statesmen delivered addresses at Cambridge University in England. One speaker told the undergraduates: “If you would succeed, know the temper of the time in which you live and act accordingly.” This philosophy of conformity has become the credo of our time. The other speaker, William E. Gladstone advised: “Do not drift with the age. Have fixed principles and stand by them.”

Our times, and the Advent message geared for this hour, demand that principle and truth be upheld irrespective of the views of the majority. *Living daily with the Advent hope affects our values, our motives, our choices, and our total lifestyle.* Seventh-day Adventist Christians are exhorted to exhibit in their lives a contrast to the behavior of the world.

Several sciences – psychology, sociology, anthropology – help us to understand and explain the human lifestyle. Christian ethics, however, transcend description of behavior. Drawing on revealed data about the nature, condition, and destiny of human beings, it offers directions for daily life. The foundation of Christian ethics is Christian Theology, more particularly, the teachings of the Bible. The task of Christian ethics is to provide guidance by clarifying what is good, what is right and what is the acceptable way to reach moral excellence. (*Commentary Reference Series*, Vol. 12, p. 675).

“The Bible is a book which discloses the principles of right and wrong” –  
Fundamentals of Christian Education p. 131.

## **DRESS**

That many in the church are living by greatly lowered standard is too sadly evident. We recognize this as it relates to dress. The street corner philosophy is:

*Too high – Too low*

*Too Tight – Just Right*

Soon the descending neckline, will reach the ascending hemline. The order of the day seems to be: Plunging necklines, bare backs and even topless garb. In *1 Timothy 2:9*, Paul tells us that “Women should adorn themselves modestly and sensibly in seemly apparel” (A.S.V) The biblical principle relative to dress is the principle of modesty.

“Modesty in dress implies that clothing must provide sufficient covering for the body so that others are not embarrassed or tempted. Women play a vital role in maintaining public morality and there is no question that the tendency of many today to wear revealing clothing contributes immeasurably to the depravity of our time. The nudity that is found in modern fashion is condemned absolutely by the Bible.” (Mod or Modesty, p. 7)

The dress style of all of us, go along with the lifestyle. In *Selected Messages Book 2*, p. 475 we read about dress being an index of the character. An index is that which indicates or discloses. Thus, the index to a book is a means of disclosing the contents of the book. A person’s dress indicates, usually with some accuracy, what he is. So dress is one index telling what is inside the heart. And surely, no Seventh-day Adventist will dress so as to lead people to misunderstand Christ’s principles or categorize His people as immodest, proud, or self-centered.

## **MORALS**

Nowadays, it is thought that changing times are in themselves sufficient justification for changing morals. Purity use to be admired and impurity pitied. Today purity is pitied and impurity publicized.

In the book, “*10 Stupid Things Women Do To Mess Up Their Lives*, by Dr. Laura Schlessinger, we find this shocking story: A thirty-one year old woman who has had affairs with athletes in two sports said this to Time Magazine (11/25/91): “For women many of whom don’t have meaningful work, the only way to identify themselves is to say whom they slept with. A woman who sleeps around is called a woman of whoredom; but a woman who sleeps with Magic Johnson is a woman who has slept with Magic Johnson. It’s almost as if it gives her legitimacy.”

The poet Pope said:

“Vice is a monster of so frightened men,  
As to be hated needs to be seen,  
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face we just endure,  
then pity, then embrace.”

Someone has said: Television presents a parade of people who have lost the power of astonishment at their own actions, who have lost any sense of propriety, who rather than repenting of sins, flaunt their sins under the label of alternative lifestyle. We live in a culture that has grown so accustomed to the dark, that it doesn’t ever realize the lights are out.”

Inspiration tells us: Even some who profess to keep God’s commandments are guilty of the sin of adultery. Moral Principles, strictly carried out, becomes the only safe guard of the soul.” (*Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 2, p 352*). Then again in *Messages to Young People*: “The church is languishing for the help of young men who will with their ardent zeal stir up the sluggish energies of God’s people, and so increase the power of the church in the world. Young men are wanted who will resist the tide of worldliness, and lift a voice of warning against the first step in immorality” (p. 25).

The late Dr. Samuels Bacchiocchi made this observation in his book: *Christian Dress and Adornment*. He stated that the early Methodists lived a plain lifestyle, avoiding gambling, dancing, cosmetics and jewelry, including rings. However, there was a relaxation of church standards resulting in a decline of spirituality and membership.

On page 120 of the above mentioned book, one Bishop Kelly issues a warning to Seventh-day Adventist. According to Kelly, “all that Adventist need to do to stop growing, and begin declining, is to emphasize that church standards of abstinence, dress, diet, tithing, etc., are not really essential to salvation.”

In this final hour of earth’s history the church must not lower its standards, blur its identity, or muffle its witness, but must with renewed emphasis give strong support to the principles that have distinguished the Remnant Church through its history, and have kept it separate from the world.

## CONCLUSION

As a Church, if we are going to exhibit this vibrant lifestyle in our walk with God there must be death of the old man of sin. If the old man of sin is dead, the old way of living and doing is dead also. By the same token, if the new man created in Christ Jesus unto good works is alive, the new way – a beautiful new lifestyle – begins to appear. This is possible only through divine grace. Genuine conversion is needed not once in years, but daily. This conversion brings a man into a new relation with God. “No renewed heart can be kept in a condition of sweetness without a daily application of the Salt of the Word. Divine grace must be received daily, or no man will stay converted” (E. G. White, *Review & Herald*, September 14, 1897). May we reflect this vibrant lifestyle in our walk with God, day by day.

### **Questions for Discussion**

1. Discuss the addresses given by the two statesmen.
  - (a) Drift with the age – Go with the Flow?
  - (b) Have fixed principles and stand by them?
2. How can we experience a decline in spirituality and membership?
3. How can we achieve and maintain this vibrant lifestyle in our walk with God?

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**I RETURN MY LIFE TO GOD THROUGH GIVING**

by Pastor Nord Punch

“Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase: so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.” Proverbs 3:9, 10.

Money or material possessions have become the defining quality of life for many people. A person’s success or failure, his worth as an individual, is often measured by the monetary value of his estate. I know of a certain Caribbean island where years ago, people were being selected as jurors to sit at the high court, mainly on the basis of the worth of their estate. In most areas of our society those who are considered wealthy have a distinct advantage over the less fortunate ones. Even today people will still make the remark that “money talks”.

Do you know that money, or material things, is the theme most referred to in Scripture? Two-thirds of the parables of Jesus deal with money or material possessions. While there are about 500 references to prayer, and less than five hundred on the subject of faith, there are over 2,300 biblical references to material possessions. If God considers the subject so important, surely we should also.

God has given to us the system of tithes and offerings to enable us to put money or material possession in its right place. But why does God consider material things so important? Here are a few significant points to consider. Money or material possessions represent us as individuals. We invest ourselves physically, mentally and spiritually in the pursuit of material gain. Some work too hard and suffer ill health while attempting to increase their material status. Others succeed in lifting their social standing but in the process lose the common touch, abandoning the spirit of compassion for one of aloofness, becoming bereft of empathy and distant from those whom they consider to be in lower strata of the social landscape.

### **OUR IDENTITY WITH MONEY**

Jesus says in Luke 12:34 “For where your treasure, is there will your heart be also.” Money or material possession is intricately bound-up and interwoven with our life. Generally speaking, money is a byproduct of life. We may be employed or involved otherwise in physical labour. If we work for ourselves we may say that we receive an income. If we hire ourselves to someone then we will receive a salary or wages. The end result is the same in either case. But in the process of earning that income we would have used our physical, mental and spiritual energies. So in a very real sense the money that we earn represents a part of our life expended in the process. When therefore we return tithes and offerings to the Lord, we are returning to Him in a very tangible way, part of our life which He has so lovingly given to us.

Now God has not simply created us, given us sufficient “life force” to last so many years, and abandoned us to ourselves. Every bit of food that we eat, every sip of drink that we take, every breath that we breathe is stamped with the love of God. We could never perform any of these seemingly natural exercises without the special empowerment of our loving Heavenly Father. He has not wound-us-up like some mechanical instrument and left us on our own, nor has He placed a battery within us that will determine our performance or our endurance. The truth is that we cannot draw a single breath without His gracious enabling power. It is truly “in Him we live, and move, and have our being...for we are also His offspring.” *Acts 17:28*.

The question therefore is: How much of me am I willing to give to God? According to the scriptures, the very least that God requires of us with regards to money or material possessions is a tithe or one tenth of our increase. So when I return my tithes to Him I am only giving Him the minimum. To do any less would be to become a robber. The scriptures ask quite pointedly: "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." *Malachi 3:8-10*.

### **PRESENTING A TRUE SACRIFICE**

Unfortunately, there are many who return tithes faithfully to the Lord, but they fall short with regards to the offering. However the text specifically says that the robbery is both of tithes and offerings. Truly, the Lord does not say just how much offerings we must give to Him. But when we examine the history of Israel we discover that they gave offerings equivalent to the tithes and even above the tithes.

Ellen White points out: "The Lord does not need our offerings. We cannot enrich Him by our gifts.... Yet God permits us to show our appreciation of His mercies by self-sacrificing efforts to extend the same to others. This is the only way in which it is possible for us to manifest our gratitude and love to God. He has provided no other." *Counsels on Stewardship*, pages 18, 19.

In Old Testament times the people of God gave a tenth as tithes unto the Lord. Then they gave a second ten percent as offerings. They followed this by giving an additional five percent, as special gifts for special projects such as the building of the tabernacle or temple. A few gave as much as one-third of their increase back to the Lord. In New Testament times, when the church was facing severe hardship and persecution in Jerusalem, some members sold their property and gave to the Lord.

Today, we will agree that there is a dire need for funds to advance the cause of Christ. So the question is, how much shall we give? And even more importantly, how much are we willing to give? *Let us remember that true sacrifice has more to do with our willingness to give than with the actual amount given.* It is the motive that prompts the giving that qualifies us as having made or failed to make a sacrifice.

Our returns to God represent us as followers of Christ. It is not practical to give an arm or leg to Him. But we labour with our legs, arms and head, and yes, with our whole body, to earn money. And He expects a reasonable return from us. The question is, therefore: How much of our earnings are we willing to dedicate to the service of our Lord and Redeemer? "The spirit of liberality is the spirit of heaven. The spirit of selfishness is the spirit of Satan... Christians should act from fixed principles, following the Saviour's example of self denial and self-sacrifice." *Counsels on Stewardship*, page 25.

The law of nature is to give. The rain falls from the heavens and waters the earth. The water is collected in streams and rivers, and eventually makes its way into lakes and seas. Then, through the process of evaporation the water is taken up into the atmosphere where condensation takes place, and it falls again to the earth. Thus the water cycle is repeated again and again. The plants provide the animals with food, and in turn the animals supply the plants

with fertilizer. Each one is interdependent. In all of God's creation, mankind alone is selfish. Hence the words of Paul take on great significance: "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself." *Romans 14:7*. This is a lesson that we all need to learn, and the sooner we learn it will be better.

## **CONCLUSION**

While we still have opportunity let us be sanctified daily to the Lord, and dedicate our possessions to the advancement of His kingdom of grace. May we always remember that our material gifts represent a measure of our time, talents and body consecrated to His service. Then the quality of those gifts will to a great extent be indicative of our relationship with Jesus who gave all to redeem us from destruction. Thus we will consider it a real joy and honour to return unto Him a reasonable portion of that which He has entrusted to us.

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