



ILLINOIS Focus



Ron Aguilera, President

CALLED TO BE A GOOD STEWARD



You have probably heard the word “stewardship” many times. Even though it is a church word, maybe you are not sure what the word means. Simply stated, a steward is someone who is appointed to take care of another’s property. So, applying that to biblical stewardship, it means God created us in His image to be His managers over the world He created (Genesis 1:27-30). God says we are responsible to Him for how we manage our lives AND the resources that come into our possession because everything we have we owe to Him.

As I reflect upon the years of being faithful to God, I have discovered no matter where we are in our walk with Jesus, there is always a next step in stewardship. Psalm 24:1 comes to mind, “the earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it...” Since God made everything, knows everything, and owns everything, His perspective of how we should manage our lives and resources is perfect. God can see how our choices and decisions will affect us today and how the consequences, good or bad, will affect our families for generations to come. Recognizing that everything comes from God must occur before we can be the stewards He calls us to be.

So, how can we be the faithful stewards God calls us to be? Here are four stewardship ideas I have learned over the years:

One: God has ownership; we have stewardship. Our God is generous, the ultimate giver; loves us so much that He gave His Son, Jesus, so we could be reunited with Him. John 3:16 says, “for God so loved the world that he GAVE his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” Because

all your soul and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.” The reality is that one day we will see how our faithfulness made a difference in someone else’s life, how it gave them an opportunity at eternal life.

Three: our relationship with money will always impact our relationship with Jesus. Often, we do not experience the full and abundant life the Bible describes because we are not listening to Jesus and doing what He says. He

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ISSUE FOCUS

STEWARDSHIP

we are created in the image of God, we have God’s DNA, so when we proclaim Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we are no longer living for ourselves, but for our generous and giving God, who saves us. That’s why it’s impossible to become a fully devoted follower of Jesus without also putting God first in our finances.

Two: God will always call us to generosity. When we give financially to support the church or meet another person’s needs, our generosity is being used to fulfill the first and greatest commandment, “love the Lord your God with all your heart and with

can’t bless us because we disobey His instructions to return a tenth of what He has given us for His work. He does this not because He needs it, but because Jesus wants us to put our hope and our security in Him, not our bank accounts.

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& MORE





SOMETHING...

Arkadiusz Bojko,
Trust Services
and Stewardship Director

Most of us probably have witnessed or experienced this kind of a situation, and although more and more of us are using online giving platforms, the principles are the same:

During the worship service, as the deacons move between the rows, people are nervously reaching to their pockets, purses, and wallets to find there something that they can put in the offering plate. Some will eventually find something, others will not. Although we all know that the offering is a part of our worship service, not all of us remember or are ready for it. Thus, we offer whatever comes to our hand and whatever is available now. Not necessarily what we would have offered if we could

“**WHATEVER YOU CHOOSE,
BE CONSISTENT.**”

think about it more deeply and plan for it.

As we enter the New Year of 2022, I would like to encourage you to plan for systematic giving. If you are doing it already, thank you for your faithful support of Christ's mission! You can skip the next part.

For those of you to where this type of giving may be new, please consider it. After faithfully returning your tithe, think about and plan how much of your income you can sacrifice to support other causes. How much have you been blessed and how can your offerings reflect those blessings? How do they compare to your non-essential spending?

While planning, first, remember the needs of your local congregation. This community serves you and other people on the most basic level. In many cases where people are moved by the powerful and Spirit-filled message preached by one of our top television or internet evangelists, they eventually come to a local church and become members of a local community of believers. We need our local congregations, and we need them to do well! Their presence in the community is essential to outreach ministries.

When the needs of your local church are supplied for, think of the extent you can support the wider projects, including those of the Illinois Conference, North American Division, and the Church worldwide. Each month, plan how much you are able and willing to sacrifice regularly; and when you come to a decision, stick to your commitment. I would rather encourage you to start small and to grow than to make a big commitment only to change it later. After a few months, you can always evaluate your giving and increase it. You can commit to giving a certain dollar amount or a percentage. Some people start with 1% of their income, beyond the tithe, and then they prayerfully grow in this experience. Whatever you choose, be consistent.

From time to time there is a place and need for giving based on an emotional appeal. We will always deal with those special needs but there is no substitute for systematic giving. It not only provides a stream of steady income for the ministry of the church, but it helps us regularly remember and evaluate God's blessings in our life. It helps us cultivate the attitude of gratitude. Finally, our stewardship practices will be a model to the new generation of God's faithful stewards. Our actions always speak louder than our spoken words.

STEWARDSHIP OF THE SELF



Pastor Jonathan Burnett

“How can you love and accept others if you do not love and accept yourself?” This caused me to pause, when asked by my therapist. We were talking about why I find it so difficult to give myself credit for the progress I am making towards the goals and expectations I have for my life. I had previously explained to her that when I achieve something in life— I have a good week of work, follow through with my goals for eating and exercise, etc.— rather than feeling a sense of accomplishment, I briefly feel a sense of relief followed by the thought “it’s about time”, or “finally, you are doing what you’re supposed to do.” However, I do not think about or treat others in this way. I tend to see the strengths of others and the faults in myself.

I have high expectations for myself. I was raised by loving, godly, Adventist parents, pathfinder leaders, and pastors. They lovingly attempted to “scare me straight” by impressing on my mind the importance of living a life of total surrender and obedience to God’s commandments and striving for character perfection. This foundation certainly kept me from making bad choices for my life. As a young, black, Caribbean male growing up in the UK, I was able to avoid some of the pitfalls of my environment and advance despite the prejudices I faced. I am grateful to God and my upbringing for

this. However, the lingering side effect of being “scared straight” is a low tolerance for any brokenness in oneself and a fear that God’s grace may not be sufficient for one’s imperfections.

A lifetime of wrestling with God has largely healed me of my fear. On most days, I can confidently declare that I know I am saved by the goodness and grace of God and that He loves and accepts me fully and completely. I know this to be true about every single broken person in this broken world. However, it is an entirely different level of difficulty to consistently extend the grace and acceptance I know that God has for me and that I preach to others, to myself.

“ I MUST FIRST BE A STEWARD OF GOD’S TREASURE... ”

Don’t get me wrong, I have years of experience in making excuses for my issues. I have a PhD in self-pity. However, this is not the same as truly extending love and grace to myself. This is not the same as appreciating the progress I am making in the work of a lifetime to grow in grace. In other words, while I strive to love God and others, I struggle to love myself. For this reason, and others, I started seeing a therapist a few months ago.

My therapist’s question really touched the heart of the issue. Her question restates the words of Jesus in Mark 12:30-31, “and you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.” This is the first commandment; and the second, similar to the first, is, “you shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.”

If I fail to love, accept, and appreciate myself; if I neglect to take care of my heart, emotional health, mind, mental health, soul, spiritual health, strength, and my physical health, I cannot truly, fully, love God and others. So, before I can be a good steward of my time, my talent, my treasure, I must first be a steward of God’s treasure. I must love and accept and care for myself.



STEWARDSHIP

Doug Reeves,
Treasurer

Stewardship has its origins in the garden of Eden when God gave Adam the responsibility of taking care of His creation. Adam managed and took care of the animals, birds, fish, and plants. When sin entered this world, mankind was still the stewards and managers of everything that God created on this earth. Today, everything that we consider ours belong to God. Everything that we control is entrusted to us by God.

Our houses, cars, money, investments, and all other possessions belong to God. How we manage these items that were entrusted to us matters to God. When we return tithe or give offerings to God, we are merely giving back to God what He has entrusted to us. God already owns what we have.

In order to be good stewards, it is important to manage the resources that God has entrusted to us wisely. The parable Jesus told His followers about the talents in Matthew 25 and in Luke 19 reveals the stewardship principle that God established. Jesus is very clear that He expects the talents or resources He has entrusted to us to yield a return. In Matthew's account, Jesus talks about the talents being placed with the money exchangers or banks. In Luke's account, the servants are to occupy till their

master's return. When we realize that God expects a return on what He has entrusted to us, that should cause us to seek His help and counsel on how to manage His resources.

Families should have a budget for the incomes and expenses that happen each month, this will help the family to manage the resources that God has entrusted to them. Part of that budget should be systematically returning to God His tithe and giving love offerings. A budget provides a road map to help successfully manage one's personal finances.

A well-run business states spending priorities in their budget to ensure its continued existence. A well-run household will have a budget that priorities the important expenditures. Part of having a budget that works is making sure it is reasonable and that the expenses do not exceed the incomes. Every well-prepared budget will have a plan to place into savings some of the income earned. Emergencies cannot be known in advance but can be planned for through savings.

The priorities listed in a family budget are those things and causes that are important to the family. Jesus wants us to include in our family budgets returning His tithe and giving offerings as a

priority. Returning God's tithe should be an action we take as soon as we receive our paycheck. Our free will offerings demonstrate our love to Jesus.

I can testify that God is faithful when we put Him first. The 90% remaining, after the 10% tithe is returned to God, goes further than the 100%. God can cause our possessions to function and last longer. When emergencies come, we can look to God to take care of us. Putting God first does not guarantee that we will have all our wants met, but He has promised to take care of our needs.

Jesus describes the reward of the faithful servant in Matthew 25:21 NKJV, "His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'" and in Luke 19:17 NKJV "'Well done, my good servant!' his master replied. 'Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.'"

The ultimate reward to God's children who have been faithful stewards in managing God's possessions is a home with Jesus and the joy of seeing people we have touched on this earth in heaven.

He has promised to take care of our needs.

Pastor Gerzom Gomez



LAS MOTIVACIONES DEL DADOR

Las palabras dichas por David en la sucesión del trono de su hijo Salomón en 1 Crónicas 29:14 “A decir verdad, ¿quién soy yo, y quién es mi pueblo, para poder ofrecerte todo esto, y de manera voluntaria? Todo es tuyo, y lo que ahora te damos lo hemos recibido de tus manos” demuestran la actitud correcta del que es consciente de quien depende y quien es el causante de quienes somos. David quería establecer claramente delante del pueblo y de su hijo que lo sucedería en el trono, que Dios es la razón y causa de lo que tenemos y somos. Sino estamos dispuestos a reconocer esto entonces practicamos la idolatría, porque nos rendimos culto a nosotros mismos y nos damos el merito de nuestra capacidad de auto sustentarnos a nosotros mismos.

Creo que esto seria una insensates, pensar que cuando venimos a la existencia no le debemos a nadie y no dependemos de nadie. Solo hay que revisar un poco cuando llegamos al mundo y cuando estamos por dejar el mundo, como dependemos de otras personas, que sin ellas es imposible sobrevivir. Si esto es fácil entenderlo, entonces porque no reconocer que todo lo que recibimos en esta vida Dios es el dador. Claro, aun lo que buscamos egoístamente, cuando son dones naturales lo recibimos de Dios, aunque tristemente no lo reconozcamos.

David quiere puntualizar lo siguiente, el ser humano debería estar dispuesto a aportar voluntaria y alegremente a todos los privilegios concedidos, porque no lo merecemos. Hay que entender que Dios, es el dador que con su inmenso amor nos quiere llenar de sus bendiciones, entregándonos todo lo que contribuiría a nuestra felicidad. Y como es así, entonces con razón David, tenia gran gratitud a Dios, y ese sentimiento quería que el pueblo lo experimentara.

Deberíamos preguntarle al texto algo más. ¿Cómo estoy seguro de que todo lo que tengo lo recibo de Dios? La respuesta es muy simple. ¿Como tengo salud, respiro, late mi corazón, como puedo tener la capacidad de utilizar mi intelecto para desempeñar trabajos, como puedo emplear mis manos para construir y trabajar de muchas maneras, como puedo relacionarme y amar a los demás, de quien proviene todo eso? De seguro que yo no lo invente ni lo desarrolle, alguien mas poderoso que yo y de misericordias inexplicables me entrego todo eso y mas para ser útil, y funcionar para el propósito de servir a todas las cosas. Podríamos resumir que reconociendo al dador y regresándole al dador (que es toda persona que ha sido creada a la imagen del Creador) yo puedo tener sentido y propósito en esta vida, que es según el plan de Dios al crearme y ser plenamente feliz.

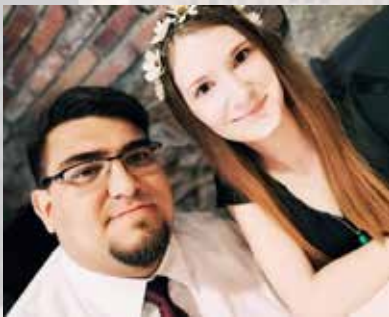
Dios nos entregó en el Edén una administración de la vida que tiene como propósito glorificarle. No podemos olvidar que somos administradores de los bienes de Dios, por lo tanto, no somos dueños de nada, porque todo lo que recibimos es en calidad de un préstamo, talentos, tiempos, tesoros, son de Dios. El, espera que lo usemos sabiamente confiando en sus promesas, porque eso desarrolla fe y dependencia de él, entonces entramos en el verdadero espíritu del adorador agradecido, como David.

Elena de White nos recuerda en su libro “Consejos Sobre Mayordomía Cristiana,” pág. 20, 21, “Dios nos permite manifestar nuestro aprecio a sus mercedes por medio de los esfuerzos abnegados realizados para compartir con otras personas. Esta es la única manera posible como podemos manifestar nuestra gratitud y nuestro amor a Dios, porque el no ha provisto ninguna otra.”

Deja que Dios desarrolle en ti buenas motivaciones e intenciones como un fiel dador.

WELCOME OUR NEW EMPLOYEES

PASTOR TYTUS GUDZOWSKI



Position:
Pastor

Church:
Polish Seventh-day Adventist Church
Southwest Seventh-day Adventist Church

Biography:

Pastor Tytus Gudzowski has responded to a call to serve the Poles in Chicago. He was born and raised in an Adventist family. Since he was 12, he served as a youth leader in his local church. When he was 24 he began his ministry as a pastor and has been working in the Seventh-day Adventist church for the last 10 years. He was a conference youth director and pastor of three churches in Poland. Pastor Tytus has been married to his lovely wife, Joanna, for the last 5 years. He is passionate about cooking and traveling. His life motto is: every saint has a past, every sinner has a future.

PASTOR RODNEY BALMES



Position:
Associate/Youth Pastor

Church:
Hinsdale Fil-Am Seventh-day Adventist Church

Biography:

Rodney Balmes will be serving as the Associate/Youth Pastor for Hinsdale Fil-Am SDA Church. He recently moved here to Illinois with his wife, Gelline, and 18 month old son, Kai.

Pastor Rodney says, "never did we think that we would be here in Illinois. We were set on staying in Florida, but God had other plans. Once this opportunity came up, every door we encountered opened right before us. We took this as a sign that this is where God wants us to be. I look forward to what God has in store for us as I embark on this new journey! I received my BA in Theology from Southern Adventist University in 2015 and my MDiv from Andrews University in 2020. I love being a creative and finding new hobbies that challenge me. My main joy is spending time with my wife and son."

RESOURCE HIGHLIGHT**WHAT IS STUPID MONEY?**

Money management is a life skill that we need from the moment we start making our first financial decision until the finish line in our stewardship journey on this earth; and yet, as important as these skills are, we don't usually learn them in school. We are lucky if we had parents who shared with us their financial life skills. Unfortunately, many people learn as they go, usually from painful mistakes loaded with consequences.

How do we avoid making stupid financial decisions that not only cause a headache, but also has the potential to completely ruin our lives? There is hope! Embark on a stewardship journey of 13 contemporary-style around-the-table discussions with Diana Santos, John Mathews, and Vivian Johnson. The estimated 35 minutes, easy to watch episodes are loaded with reliable information. The program is enhanced by street interviews and personal testimonies of people who have done it stupid and those who have done it well. They are both funny and spiritually oriented.

WHAT WILL I LEARN?

During this program you will learn the following: how to eat well and save; how to make money without making it the goal of your life; how to wisely buy and sell a house; how to save money by taking care for your health; how to avoid credit card debt; and how to save money on buying electronics. The episodes also contain short, funny, and educational segments called "Stewardship for Dummies." From time management to retirement preparation, Stupid Money has everything you need to survive and, also, thrive.

HOW DO I FIND THIS RESOURCE?

This program is brought to you by the efforts of the North American Division and is available on YouTube and Vimeo NAD Stewardship channels. Look for the playlist "Stupid Money TV" or visit stupidmoneytv.com. Watch, enjoy, and thrive!

“CALLED TO BE A GOOD STEWARD,” CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

In Matthew 6:24, He says, “no one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”

Four: greed will kill the work Jesus wants to do in you and through you. Jesus warns us in Luke 12:15, “watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.” God’s plans for us are greater than our plans for us. He knows our financial needs before we even know what we will need. God already has financial provisions in mind for you. He wants to do more in you because He wants to do more *through* you. God is a good and faithful Father. His storehouse doesn’t ever run empty. When we submit our finances and plans to Him, our ability to steward His resources increases. God will give us all He has in store!

- Ron Aguilera, Illinois Conference President

SHARE YOUR
TESTIMONY

We would love to hear what God has done in your life!
Visit www.ilcsda.org/testimony



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