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STEWARDS FROM THE CRADLE



CONTENTS

GROWING STEWARDS FROM THE CRADLE

P. 04

ANIEL BARBE

NURTURING CHILDREN INTO THE SPIRIT OF GIVING

P. 06 / ORATHAI CHURESON

STEWARDSHIP

P. 08

MANUEL A. ROSARIO SÁNCHEZ

GOOD COPYCATS NEED QUALITY ORIGINALS

P. 10 / HAZEL MARROQUIN

MAKING CHILD DISCIPLES WHO UNDERSTAND GOD AND MONEY

P. 12 / MICHAEL R. NGWARU

STEWARDSHIP HONOR

P. 14

ANDRÉS J. PERALTA

TEACHING CHILDREN FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

P. 16

MARCOS FAOICK BOMFIM

A COSTLY GIFT

P. 18

DENNIS CARLSON

BUILDING CONFIDENCE

P. 20

PAUL H. DOUGLAS

WHY THE BIG INTEREST IN INTEREST?

P. 22

JENIPHER CHITATE

04



06



10



18



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GOD FIRST
ADVENTIST STEWARDSHIP MINISTRIES

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GOOD MANAGERS IN MAKING



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LINDA MEI LIN KOH

Stewardship isn't just for adults. It's also for children, teens, and youth. Stewardship is taking care of something one does not own. From taking care of our neighborhood to learning how to manage our money, we are training our children that everything belongs to God and that He has given us the privilege of taking care of it for Him. We are God's managers!

According to developmental psychologists, children start forming habits early in life. Many habits are already in place by age 9, and altering them is more difficult to do than in earlier years. Hence, teaching and training children to be good stewards begins in the nursery. When parents begin teaching their children how to use their money to help the poor, or how to care for their bodies by choosing healthy foods, they are laying the foundation for the patterns of adult life.

Ellen White strongly urges parents to "teach your children that God has a claim upon all they possess, and that nothing

can ever cancel this claim; all they have is theirs only in trust, to prove whether they will be obedient. . . . Habits of economy, industry, and sobriety are, even in this world, a better portion for you and your children than a rich dowry."^{*}

More than ever before, today's children are bombarded with daily messages that often lead to materialism and a sense of entitlement and dissatisfaction with life. In contrast, practicing good stewardship encourages an attitude of gratitude and sharing. Thus, teaching children the spirit of giving and sharing during these formative years helps them to adopt stewardship as a lifestyle.

Parents can make learning fun by planning activities for children that teach them to take care of the things they have been given to manage.

□ **I Give My Time.** Have children list on cards how they plan to spend their time that day. The activities could include doing homework, studying the Sabbath School lesson, praying for one special person, and baking cook-

ies for other children in the neighborhood. Then discuss these activities with them.

□ **Use My Abilities to Help Others.**

Help children plan a talent show for seniors in your church or in a nursing home. Involve them in singing, reading poems, telling stories, or helping with backdrops or the sound system in the church.

□ **I Give Generously.** Let children help pack items for disaster victims; donate one of their good toys to poor children in the community; or give some of their savings to help buy needed supplies for children in the mission. They can use different envelopes to put aside a tithe, one tenth of what they have received from their pocket money and special birthday or Christmas money. One envelope can be for savings, one for spending, and one for mission. Read Proverbs 21:20 together.

□ **I Care for the World God Has Made.** They can learn to recycle materials, picking up trash instead of littering. Children need to respect property such as the school, the church, the city, and the roads. We can involve our children in special projects in the community such as picking up trash at the beach.

□ **I Keep My Body Healthy.** Read 1 Corinthians 6:19 together and ask the children to list ways they can keep their body temple strong. Make a chart on which they can jot down how much water they have drunk that day, or how many minutes of exercise they have done.

Let's start right now by teaching our children to be good managers for Jesus. It is never too early to help children understand the idea of stewardship. ●



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* Ellen G. White, *Child Guidance* (Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Pub. Assn., 1954), p. 134.

GROWING STEWARDS FROM THE CRADLE

The case for children's stewardship education

ANIEL BARBE

Come for stewardship lessons the day you start earning a salary." In real life, the probability of a church leader uttering these words is nonexistent. Our practice regarding stewardship education, however, may reveal such a mindset when little or no attention is given to stewardship education for children. Our omission is because of an unspoken belief that children first observe, and then later, when they are of age, stewardship educators will fill in the gaps in their knowledge. This is driven by a false standard where stewardship is assessed by the benefits it brings to the recipient.

This perspective leads us to brush aside children as stewards because their contributions often appear insignificant. However, if we accept the idea that our God is omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient, and the owner of everything (Ps. 24:1), the amount we bring as stewards is no longer the most important element of stewardship. Hence, our article focuses on three positive results for children when they are taught to practice good stewardship.

GROWING SELF-ESTEEM

Self-esteem refers to the value, positive or negative, one assigns to oneself. This attribution has direct consequences for the behavior and development of the person. It is well established that "enhanced initiative and pleasant feelings" are among the numerous benefits of high self-esteem.¹

The Bible speaks of young Gideon, who was struggling with a negative self-image. His comments reveal this self-assessment: *"But how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family"* (Judges 5:15). Gideon considers himself to be without resources and of low status, whereas his real condition is expressed in these words of the angel of the Lord: *"The Lord is with you, mighty warrior"* (Judges 5:12). Gideon's negative self-perception, which does not reflect reality, leads him to hide in a winepress. As a way of helping Gideon to overcome his low self-esteem, the angel attempts to convince him of what he had received: *"Go in the strength you have"* (Judges 5:12). As a result of a change in self-perception, Gideon became a great conqueror in Israel.

Stewardship education is meant to play a similar function in the lives of our children who are in a crucial stage of self-esteem formation, a window that does not remain open indefinitely.² Stewardship helps individuals to move away from the "empty pocket" mindset to where they acknowledge that they have each received something valuable from God. Generosity, a key expression of stewardship, also contributes to this purpose. For one to give or share one's talents or resources, one must first acknowledge that they have received them. As one grows in this awareness, they correspondingly



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grow in self-esteem. Stewardship education is part of God's toolbox for parents, teachers, mentors, and spiritual leaders to help children grow to their full potential.

GROWING HAPPINESS

An alarming and growing social phenomenon that we see today is unhappy children. For those of us who think of childhood as the happy, carefree, innocent season of life, this seems paradoxical. Occasional sadness is part of a child's life, but persistent sadness may reveal the presence of depression. The U.S. National Institute of Mental Health reported that from April 2019 to March 2020, 3.2 million kids aged 12 to 17 years old experienced at least one major depressive episode. It is worth noting that this was previous to the COVID-19 pandemic. The causes are many and beyond the scope of this article. However, stewardship, manifested through acts of generosity, can contribute to bringing joy back into the child's life.

Scripture offers the basis for this assertion: *"It is more blessed to give than to receive"* (Acts 20:35b). Much social science research reaches the same conclusion. A 10-day experiment during which participants were assigned to perform acts of kindness demonstrated an increase in life satisfaction by the end

of the experiment. Another experiment involving 2-year-olds observed a higher degree of happiness when giving treats than when receiving treats, and there was a peak in happiness when the act involved *costly giving*.⁴ Sean Grover provides an interesting explanation for these observations: “Too often young people fall into the trap of focusing exclusively on their own needs. This narcissistic tendency is a breeding ground for depression or anxiety. Altruism breaks through the hard shell of self-absorption by nurturing compassion for others.”⁵

IMPROVING RETENTION

Many churches are struggling with a significant reduction in attendance among young people. For many, this information is simply a statistic until the day our own son or daughter announces that he or she is no longer going to at-

A survey comprising 100,000 participants conducted by Open University of Business and BBC has revealed how people view material possessions as the source of status, freedom, and security, and even as the exchange currency for love and affection.⁷ This confirms the unsated, underlying assumption of consumerism: “Salvation can be found by acquiring and using things.”⁸ The god of gold and silver is causing thousands to drift away from the true God and His church.

Stewardship mindset and practices provide an antidote to consumerism. One of its primary objectives is to lead us to rediscover the true value of money and to put God in His rightful place. This will protect our children from deceitful consumerism and help to free others from its grip as well. The table below shows how biblical stewardship deconstructs the claims of consumerism:

CONSUMERISM	BIBLICAL STEWARDSHIP
Abundant life is the result of possessions.	Abundant life is a GIFT from God (John 10:10).
Craving for more is normal.	Cultivating CONTENTMENT is a virtue (1 Tim. 6:6).
The pathway to happiness is to get a little more.	Real happiness is found in the HAPPINESS of others (Acts 20:35).
Money provides status.	Our identity is in AFFILIATION to God (2 Cor. 6:18).
Money provides freedom.	Real freedom is in CHRIST (Gal. 5:1).
Money provides security.	God is our SHIELD (Ps. 28:7).
Money is the access pass to love.	You are UNCONDITIONALLY loved (Jer. 31:3).
Any strategy for financial well-being is acceptable.	God gives the POWER to produce wealth (Deut. 18:8).

tend church. Unless we can foster a renewed sense of ownership among young people, it will be difficult to stop or slow the hemorrhage of the younger generation from the church of their parents.

Stewardship is not a panacea, but it can contribute in at least two ways to curtailing the alarming trend of youth apostasy.

One significant known cause of spiritual wreckage is the consumerist worldview: “believing that we can find fulfillment by accumulating wealth and everything that comes with it.”⁶ In the parable of the sower it is represented by the thorny soil: “*The deceitfulness of wealth chokes the word, making it unfruitful*” (Matt. 13:22).

Stewardship education can also serve as an instrument for retention by fostering a sense of belonging in our children and young people. McIntosh and Arn in their book *What Every Pastor Should Know* share a series of questions individuals ask when deciding whether to stay or leave the church.⁹ One decisive and often final question is, “Is my contribution important?” This is questioning the value of their participation in the mission of the church. The absence of a satisfactory answer leads to a tipping point in the decision to leave the church. The stewardship message helps church members to acknowledge the value of what they have

received and teaches about partnering in God’s mission using God’s given resources. Believers journey from being bystanders to becoming active partners. In this process the young person constructs an adequate answer to the question: “Is my contribution important?”

Our primary goal in engaging and enrolling others in stewardship education for children and young people is to grow wholesome and happy disciples of Christ. When this becomes our foremost priority, we’ll have a church in better condition to participate in God’s final mission. ●



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¹ Roy F. Baumeister, Jennifer D. Campbell, Joachim I. Krueger, and Kathleen D. Vohs, “Does High Self-Esteem Cause Better Performance, Interpersonal Success, Happiness, or Healthier Lifestyles?” *Psychological Science in the Public Interest* 4, no. 1 (May 2003), pp. 20, 21; <https://doi.org/10.1111/1529-1006.01431>.

² Dario Cvencek, Anthony G. Greenwald, and Andrew N. Meltzoff, “Implicit measures for preschool children confirm self-esteem’s role in maintaining a balanced identity,” *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 62 (2016), p. 55.

³ Kathryn E. Buchanan and Anat Bardi, “Acts of Kindness and Acts of Novelty Affect Life Satisfaction,” *The Journal of Social Psychology* 150, no. 3 (2010), pp. 235-237; <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224540903365554>.

⁴ Lara B. Akin, J. Kiley Hamlin, and Elizabeth W. Dunn, “Giving leads to happiness in young children,” *PLoS one* 7, no. 6 (2012): e39211, p. 3.

⁵ Sean Grover, “4 Ways Altruism Produces Happy and Empowered Children,” *Psychology Today*, November 6, 2015; <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/when-kids-call-the-shots/201511/4-ways-altruism-produces-happy-and-empowered-children>.

⁶ Steve Wilkens and Mark L. Sanford, *Hidden Worldviews: Eight Cultural Stories That Shape our Lives* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009), p. 45.

⁷ Sophie Von Stumm, Mark Fenton O’Creedy, and Adrian Furnham, “Financial capability, money attitudes and socioeconomic status: Risks for experiencing adverse financial events,” *Personality and Individual Differences* 54, no. 3 (2013), pp. 344-349; <http://oro.open.ac.uk/35597/7/PAID%20pre-publication.pdf>.

⁸ Wilkens and Sanford, *Hidden Worldviews*, p. 45.

⁹ Gary McIntosh, “The Important First Year,” *Growth Point* 28, no. 4, April 2016; <https://cogo.church/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/GP-2016-Apr.pdf>.

NURTURING CHILDREN INTO THE SPIRIT OF GIVING

ORATHAI CHURESON

Materialism is one of the devil's most powerful tools against God's people. Even Christians tend to objectively value possessions over generosity and spirituality. Training to combat these tendencies must begin in childhood. Cognitive science teaches us that persistent effort and reinforcement is essential in making desired habits automatic. Habits of generosity and stewardship are no exception.

A research finding, published by the journal *Neuron*, March 8, 2012, concludes that children's ability to consider the preferences of others is linked with maturation of the brain's prefrontal cortex. This area of the brain governs self-control, higher cognitive function, and moral reasoning.

Ellen G. White's *Counsels on Stewardship* corroborates this finding. Ellen White emphasized training children in habits of self-control and self-denial. She wrote that parents should emphasize habits of obedience to God, concern for the spiritual and physical well-being of others, simple living, and avoidance of selfish and impulsive purchases. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart; ... and thy neighbor as thyself."

The teaching of self-control early in life will lead to a contented, joyful, mature adulthood. Proverbs 22:6 says, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." Good lifetime stewardship begins with

habits of thinking developed early in life. Proper training and environment reinforce biology and neurology in enabling the child to mature as a godly and morally responsible adult.

As the Bible says in 1 Timothy 6:10, "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs." This warning should motivate us to teach our children stewardship of finances and other resources.

We suggest some practical pointers to foster the spirit of giving:

START NURTURING YOUNG STEWARDS

Some parents believe that understanding stewardship comes naturally. This is not true in most cases. Social interaction may

teach children to share and acknowledge one another's needs; however, it does not guarantee that children will give unselfishly and even sacrificially in later life. The fostering of unselfishness must be intentional.

Singapore is a wealthy country with few natural resources. Almost everything is imported, even drinking water. Thus, teaching children to wisely manage resources in one of the most expensive places in the world is essential. Children go to summer camps to learn how to save and spend wisely. This could be one of the reasons why Singaporeans tend to be very disciplined financially.

We can begin by teaching children wise habits of health and nutrition. Stewardship of time can begin with limiting screen time. Don't give them everything they want when they want it; waiting, while unpleasant, leads to the development of patience and impulse control. In the end, children will feel self-respect for controlling wants and impulses. Give them opportunities to be productive by doing simple household chores and helping in the community.

BE TRANSPARENT IN OUR FINANCIAL POSITION

Many adults believe allowing children to become aware of our financial difficul-



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ties would be too stressful for them. In fact, however, allowing children to understand the financial situation in an age-appropriate way can be helpful. Children will learn to adjust to any financial situation.

As kids get older, discuss the cost of living and financial obligations with them. Enlist their help in addressing financial difficulties. In our house we remind our children to turn off the lights, turn down the air conditioning, or not to waste water. We also teach our children to wait for things they want. Waiting leads to clear reasoning about their desires. We do not want to make life less enjoyable for our teens; we want them to understand that those things cost money.

Parents should also talk with teens about how they can become financially independent in their own home. This will help them to develop realistic expectations and wise spending habits as they enter adulthood.

BE GENEROUS PARENTS AND ADULTS

Children notice the inconsistency between our belief and practice. If we are going to preach generosity, we must practice it. Being generous as a family has been one of the most rewarding things we've done to teach our young children stewardship. Children saw us sharing our homegrown vegetables. We got them to deliver freshly prepared food to neighbors. When they returned, their faces were painted with big smiles, coupled with excitement as they were holding some ice-cream or cookies given by the neighbors. They immediately understood that kindness is repaid with kindness. Younger children should be given an allowance so they can exercise stewardship and generosity by returning tithe and offerings to God.

TEACH THE PRINCIPLE OF EARNING, SAVING, AND GIVING

Saving and giving are linked. We must have something at hand to give generously and willingly. Children must learn how to save and share when needs arise. As parents,

we must provide for our children's needs: food, clothing, school supplies, or sports equipment. Even these needs can turn into wants when older children desire certain brands.

Children must be taught to take good care of their things. Help them to understand that parents sacrifice to provide for them and that they should value items accordingly. Parents might also consider giving them some tasks

Make earning, saving,
and giving the culture of
your home.

to do to earn financial rewards for their dream item. In this way, children will value what they have and learn to take pride in ownership. Children must realize that the financial and material blessings are not just for ourselves. Blessings come with responsibility and the ability to give and share. Make earning, saving, and giving the culture of your home.

AWAKEN THE SENSE OF HUMILITY, GRATITUDE, AND APPRECIATION

The spirit of giving comes with a sense of gratitude and thankfulness. Burkett advises that adults must help children to value every gift given—whether it's family relationships, friendship, nature, time, or resources—as manifestations of God's abundant love, grace, and mercy. This way we will inculcate humility and gratitude. Help children to understand that giving and sharing is our tangible expression of love and adoration to God.

Ellen White has warned parents not to teach children to expect gifts on holiday seasons and their birthdays. This practice has actually taught children to develop selfish habits and developed a tendency to think that they have the

right to demand things as their due. Instead of facilitating the greedy and selfish habits of the world, we must help children to “increase the knowledge of God and to waken thankfulness of heart for His mercy and love in preserving their lives for another year.”

SUMMING UP

To sum up, Ellen G. White is very clear and purposeful in her statement that children are to be taught and guided to be obedient to God's command to become good stewards. Stewardship is a way of life that does not come naturally. It must be taught. Children must not only hear our words, they must see our example as we show generosity in tithes, offerings, and service to the spiritual and physical needs of our communities and the world.

Ellen White has summed up the essence of stewardship: “Like the wise men of old you may offer to God your best gifts, and show by your offerings to Him that you appreciate His Gift to a sinful world. Set your children's thoughts running in a new, unselfish channel, by inciting them to present offerings to God for the gift of His only-begotten Son.” In all teaching, help our children to realize that a spirit of giving is generated by our appreciation of God's best gift to our sinful world—Jesus Christ! 🌟



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¹ *Science Daily*, “Self-centered kids? Blame their immature brains,” March 7, 2012; retrieved from <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2012/03/120307132206.htm>.

² Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Stewardship* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1940), p. 295.

³ C. J. Griffin, *Stewardship Sermons* (Cavite: Philippines Publishing House, 2002).

⁴ Bible texts are from the *Holy Bible, New International Version*. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

⁵ L. Burkett and K. C. Bowler, *Money Matters for Kids*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 2000).

⁶ White, *Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 296.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 297.

STEWARDSHIP

A divine tool for the education of our children

MANUEL A. ROSARIO SÁNCHEZ

I intend to connect two concepts not always seen as related. I am talking about stewardship and the education of our children. What is the purpose of Christian stewardship? What role does it play in the instruction of our kids?

When analysed in-depth, stewardship and education are more closely related than we might think. The potential of stewardship to inform and develop our children's values—a major goal of the education process—and give direction and structure to their lives has been underutilized. Stewardship performs a function comparable to that of the spinal cord in our bodies. It gives our lives direction and foundation.

EDUCATION, STEWARDSHIP AND REDEMPTION

Church cofounder Ellen White linked education to redemption, stating: “In the highest sense the work of education and redemption are one.”¹ She was absolutely right, since the foundation of both sciences—education and redemption—is Jesus. Consequently, to educate is to redeem, and “the true object of education is to restore the image of God in the soul.”²

It is vital to retain this broad vision. The one-dimensional approach that sees education as the mere acquisition of scientific knowledge strips it of its eternal sense.

Likewise, we must promote a wholistic view of stewardship and avoid an unhealthy reductionist approach. Many believers associate stewardship only with the return of tithes and offerings. They are indeed related, but stewardship is much more than the faithful return of tithes and offerings, the clever use of time and talents, or the

care of our bodies. Although all these elements are a fundamental part of stewardship, they are not stewardship itself.

Reflecting on the relationship of stewardship and money, LeRoy Edwin Froom declares:

This mighty principle neither begins nor ends with money. Tithing is stewardship as far as it goes. But stewardship in its larger aspects is the all-inclusive principle of the whole of life. It is not a theory nor a philosophy but a working program. It is in verity the Christian law of living. It forms the Christian appraisal of privilege, opportunity, power, and talent.

From this great umbrella of Christian stewardship, the mentor will integrate all the other values.

It is necessary to an adequate understanding of life, and essential to a true, vital religious experience. It is not simply a matter of mental assent but is an act of the will and a definite, decisive transaction touching the whole perimeter of life.³

This same author indicates that “one may pay tithe and yet be far from the Spirit of Stewardship.”⁴ Some of the most celebrated philanthropists in the twenty-first century are either agnostics or atheists. Their sense of generosity is admirable, but they are not sufficient as role models for would-be Christian

stewards.

One of the greatest dangers of a reductionist approach to stewardship is that it excludes our children. To achieve the educational potential of stewardship training, we need a wholistic approach. The idea I want to point out is that stewardship touches all aspects of our lives. Stewardship is redemption, and it also seeks to restore God's image in the steward.

STEWARDSHIP AND WORLDVIEW

A comprehensive view of stewardship suggests that its goal is to help us develop a worldview based on biblical values. A worldview is a particular philosophy of life. “Everyone has a worldview. Whenever any of us thinks about anything—from a casual thought (Where did I leave my watch?) to a profound question (Who am I?)—we are operating within such a framework. In fact, it is only the assumption of a worldview—however basic or simple—that allows us to think at all.”⁵

A philosophy of life for some might be: “This life is everything; there will be nothing beyond it.” Someone with that mentality might indeed live like this: “*Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die*” (1 Cor. 15:23, NIV). Another very different philosophy of life could be: “*This life is not the end; there will be a final judgment,*” and “*We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ*” (2 Cor. 5:10, NIV).

According to James W. Sire, the seven fundamental questions addressed by any worldview are: What is prime reality—the really real? What is the nature of external reality, that is, the world around us? What is a human being? What happens to a person at death? Why is it possible to know anything at all? How do we know what is right and wrong? What is the meaning of human history?⁶



The exciting thing is that all these questions addressed by the educational process find a perfect answer in stewardship. It all begins by recognizing the Creator and acknowledging His relationship with the creature. This is the initial task of the book of Genesis.

STEWARDSHIP AND VALUES

There is nothing like the Bible to educate in values (2 Tim. 3:15-17), and nothing like stewardship to put those values into action. Experts in human behavior agree that the first seven years of life are essential in character formation. Values such as obedience, respect, honesty, kindness, generosity, regularity, perseverance, diligence, and many more have usually already been integrated at that age.

Experts at the University of California in Riverside (UCR) noted that:

A person's character and personality are largely established by the time they are very young. The traits that will define that individual throughout his or her life can be clearly identified when he or she is as little as 7 years old. In a new investigation, scientists show that, by the time they start going to school, children already exhibit the personality traits that

will remain with them throughout their lives.⁷

It is axiomatic that the best education is the one that provides the precept and the example, and stewardship is precisely structured in that sense. As already said, Christian stewardship is the backbone of the Christian life. Anyone can claim to love God but ignore His law; however, stewardship enables one to support with deeds what you profess.

Imagine a father, mother, pastor, or teacher who wishes to educate their little lambs in values based on Christian stewardship. They would soon realize that it is the perfect meta-narrative to anchor all the necessary principles for this life and the life to come.

This first principle informs the child where he comes from and clarifies who he is, thus becomes the starting point for other values.

Once children recognize that they are creatures of God made in His image, they can clearly understand why a code of ethics congruent with their origin is expected of them. From this great umbrella of Christian stewardship, the mentor will integrate all the other values. It will therefore be easy to teach children to recognize God's rights over them. Obedience will take a new dimension.

Returning tithes and offerings, as well as practicing generosity with others, will make more sense for you.

When we look at the case of Joseph, for example, and how the principles of excellence (Gen. 39:5, 6), faithfulness (verses 7-12), planning (Gen. 41:46), saving (verses 19, 56, 57), and many more shaped his life as a steward, we realize that stewardship has much to contribute to the human development of all of us, and especially of our children. 🟡



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¹ Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1952), p. 30.

² Ellen G. White, *Mind, Character, and Personality* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2001), vol. 1, p. 359.

³ LeRoy E. Froom, *Stewardship in Its Larger Aspects* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1928), p. 2.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 5th ed. (England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004), p. 19.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 22, 23.

⁷ Tudor Vieru, "Our Personality Is Fully Developed By the Age of 7;" *softpedia*, August 6, 2010; <https://news.softpedia.com/news/Our-Personality-Is-Fully-Developed-By-the-Age-of-7-151093.shtml>.

GOOD COPYCATS NEED QUALITY ORIGINALS

HAZEL MARROQUIN

Parents are children's earliest models of behavior, for good or ill. Children imitate parents. If parents' behavior and attitude toward life are correct, functional, and most of all godly, this is a good thing. But all of us have behaviors that we would rather our children not imitate. For example, according to Barna research, only 14 percent of American adults engaged in daily Bible reading and devotions in 2018. Financial planning and literacy are spotty too; before COVID, four in ten American families lacked the resources to deal with a financial emergency. Eighty percent of American families are in debt. Similar things can be said about savings, retirement planning, and so on.

So what can we teach our children about money and stewardship when we as adults are struggling? We could keep it simple and say: of every dollar, return to God His dime, as my mother would say. But is it that simple? It's a good start to be sure, but is that really all there is to stewardship, and are we doing it ourselves?

AS WE SAY AND AS WE DO

Stewardship is not just tithing and giving offerings. It also includes managing our financial resources in such a way that we have money to give to God while still able to take care of our own needs and share unselfishly with others. What is necessary to reach this state, and how can we teach and model such behaviors to our children in opposition to a culture



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that emphasizes immediate gratification?

First, we must take stock of our own behaviors. For example, do we buy things we don't need, and possibly don't even use once we buy them? Are our purchases feeding some future bulk trash collection? Self-control and forethought are hard lessons for anyone of any age. They are even harder when the main authority figures in a child's life are not themselves living up to good financial practices. So start with that.

Next—now that we have ourselves sorted out—we must teach our children the real value of money. While money is not to take priority over God, it is important. Our relationship with it reveals a lot about our character and, indeed, about our relationship with God. Everything we own actually belongs to God. Managing God's property (stewardship in its fundamental sense) is serious. We want to treat our money seriously and teach our children to treat it seriously.

How can we do this? First, we must teach the proper attitude toward money both verbally and by example. We can begin with responsible spending. It is important that we and our children know where our money goes.

FINANCIAL LITERACY THROUGH REAL-LIFE SITUATIONS

You can teach your children appropriate ways of handling money through real-life experiences, such as the following:

Let your children see you handling financial transactions by taking them with you to the bank.

Take your children shopping with you. Let them see how and why you buy things. Let them spend part of the money, and allow them to choose some of the items. Recently, a mother of a 6-year-old shared an experience with me. She teaches her daughter the value of money and informed choices by allowing her to choose one item. The child can choose only one item regardless of how many stores they visit that day. One time they visited three stores, and the daughter chose an item from the second store not knowing there would be a third option. Once in the car, the mother realized that her child was not happy. When asked why, her daughter said, "Next time I would appreciate know-

ing in advance how many store options I have to choose from.” Critical thinking in action!

Give them three piggy banks or jars: one each for saving, sharing, and spending. Every time the child receives money, you have the opportunity to teach them about tithing, offerings, and how to divide their money.

Help them to earn their own money. They can collect and sell recyclables, help with family garage sales, do yardwork, tutor fellow students, look after pets, etc. In this way they can learn about giving, spending and saving in a very immediate way.

Take advantage of mentoring opportunities in the church so children will be aware of the needs in the church and the community. It also helps to prepare them for leadership roles.

TEACHING FINANCIAL PRINCIPLES

When a child is old enough to have money of their own, teach them about budgeting. Ensure that they have a plan for its use and that they stick to it. A good practice in addition to budgeting may be to give each penny a name. Also, don't be afraid to share both good and bad money experiences of your own with them.

Children being children, they may not necessarily grasp the value of delayed gratification and impulse control. We may all have heard about the experiment where researchers leave a child in a room with a piece of candy on the table and tell the child that they can have another piece if they can refrain from eating the piece that is there. Few young children pass this test, and chances are, yours won't either. But they can reason out the consequences of decisions, even at a young age. Explain how poor financial decisions cause problems of all kinds: health, emotional, even spiritual. Also let them know that we want them to grow up and live prosperous lives as free as possible of stress and anxiety.

As children become more mature, we can teach them increasingly complex

concepts: debt and its proper uses, for example. We rightly teach that debt is to be avoided whenever possible, but there are times when it may be necessary to borrow money or use a credit card. Few houses would be sold if buyers could not take out mortgages, for example. We must teach them that there are responsible and even godly ways to make use of credit and debt without fear or guilt. Emphasize that responsible debt involves a clear path to getting back out of debt

Don't be afraid to share
both good and bad
money experiences of
your own with your children.

as soon as possible. What this means in practice is that a credit card is not free money. One must pay it off every month. Teach the lesson of Proverbs 22:7: don't become slaves to debt. Ultimately and ideally, God wants us to be free from debt so that we can help others and give to His mission.

RAISING GENEROUS CHILDREN

Even though we may know that our money belongs to God, we sometimes forget. To prevent this, acquaint your children early in life with the joys of generosity to God and others.

Let children know that when we give offerings and donations, we help expand God's kingdom and also have rewarding interactions with others in our community. These interactions make it easier for us to spread the gospel. For example, a child from our church recently started painting sun-catchers to raise money for local foster-care children. As of this writing, she is close to raising \$1,000!

Create opportunities for children to

learn to be good stewards. During the Christmas season, our church adopted a local public elementary school. We gave presents to the students and their siblings. In response, we received a large envelope filled with thank-you notes, and even a canvas that one child painted of our church. Two letters caught my attention: both writers said that when they grow up, they, too, will give gifts to others as we did. Examples can be powerful!

CONCLUSION

We are not born understanding basic financial concepts, and certainly generosity and stewardship don't come naturally to us. Even adults struggle. One can presume their parents struggled too, and passed on dysfunctional money behaviors to their offspring. Years ago, while I was working in a bank, a man came in to ask me if I could help him balance his checkbook. He handed it over and pointed to me with disbelief that he still had many checks left, and yet still somehow his account was overdrawn. At first I thought it was a joke, but soon I realized how serious he was. I never forgot this object lesson in the supreme importance of basic money management.

Above all else, it is our responsibility to teach children to love Jesus with their finances. Teach them to joyfully share not just their money but His love, too, through words and actions. After all, God loves a cheerful giver (2 Cor. 9:6, 7). ◉



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¹ “State of the Bible, 2018,” accessed March 15, 2021, <https://www.barna.com/research/state-of-the-bible-2018-seven-top-findings/>.

² Angelita Williams, “New Research: Four in 10 American Households Had Difficulty Withstanding a Financial Crisis Before COVID-19,” accessed March 15, 2021, <https://www.finra.org/media-center/newsreleases/2021/new-research-four-10-american-households-had-difficulty-withstanding>.

MAKING CHILD DISCIPLES WHO UNDERSTAND GOD AND MONEY

MICHAEL R. NGWARU

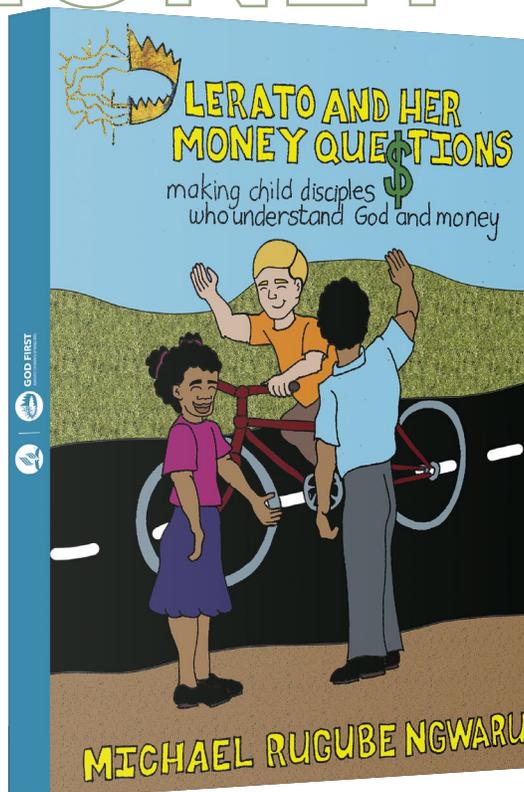
Dynamic Steward (DS): Pastor Ngwaru, can you describe the genesis of this project: *Lerato and Her Money Que\$tions*?

Michael Ngwaru (MN): Just as my family and I had finished a leisurely drive in a lion park near Pretoria, South Africa, Pastor Aniel Barbe called me. I can still remember that it was on a sunny Sunday afternoon. He phoned from the venue at which he and Pastor Bomfim were conducting some stewardship seminars for the pastors of the two local conferences in Johannesburg. The call came as a total surprise to me.

“I know it’s a surprise call, Mike,” Pastor Barbe said. “I just want to let you know that we are here in Midrand, South Africa, training pastors. Pastor Bomfim, the General Conference [GC] Stewardship director, and I are inviting you for a luncheon tomorrow over here. Are you available?”

“Invitation for lunch?” The invitation was an even bigger surprise than the call itself.

“Nothing big, Mike,” Pastor Barbe said. “We just want to discuss the book about money that you wrote for children. We found it intriguing and want to discuss some possibilities.”



The next day, Pastor Bomfim did not waste time sharing his proposal:

“Pastor Ngwaru, I’m particularly touched by the financial principles that you presented in this small book you wrote for children, *Thabiso and His Money Secrets*. It looks perfect for the secular mind. Aniel and I were wondering if you would adapt it to incorporate a wholistic approach to Adventist stewardship education for young people, with a special focus on money. That’s why we called you.”

I totally agreed with his observation that my *Thabiso* book was designed to reach secular children since there was no mention of God or any Bible texts in it.

I’d planned to help the Children’s Ministries Department to use it as an entering wedge into highly secularized communities. Believe me, the plan worked. This book and the other ones I wrote for this same purpose became keys to unlock doors for child evangelism in Pretoria and Johannesburg. “Pastor Mike, this is the kind of stuff we need for our children,” said the owner of one of the pre-primary schools in Pretoria North. “Parents are extremely happy, and they are wondering if you could write on other topics such as nutrition and bullying.” The principles in my books were Bible-based, however, even though there was no mention of God in them.

To cut a long story short, I accepted the challenge to rewrite my money book for church-going children.

DS: How did you proceed from there?

MN: I must admit that I struggled to conceptualize the kind of theme that would really bring freshness into stewardship education since money is a widely discussed topic in both church and society. What is it I should write about? What are the pressing needs as far as our young people are concerned? How is the book going to contribute toward the broader objectives of the church? These were some of the questions that ran wild in my mind. Finally, I experienced a breakthrough that can be summarized in two lines: “Catch them young. Life may begin at 40, but disciple-making begins at birth.”

After this reflection, there was no doubt in my mind that the book has to train young people about spiritual growth and money. Hence the title and content of the ebook, which is now ready for distribution worldwide: *Lerato and Her Money Que\$tions: making child disciples who understand God and money*.

DS: How do you conceptualize the purposes and goals of your book?

MN: I consider this book a disciple-making tool. It is designed to help its readers make sense of God and also of money in a world that is tilted toward secularism and materialism. The big question, though, is “How do you become a true disciple in a world like that?” It’s a challenging question, and this book doesn’t have all the answers, but it has done its best to suggest a more wholistic approach. Here is how it does that:

1. It helps its readers understand God and money in the context of the great controversy. We all know that the world is full of crime, corruption, pleasure seeking, and many other vices related to money. So how does God make sense in a world that glorifies money above worship?
2. It seeks to develop a deep relationship between the reader and Christ. The rationale is that proper ways of obtaining and using money should be biproducts of spiritual transformation and growth in grace just as Ephesians 2:8-10 and 2 Peter 3:18 demonstrate. This book contains not just facts about God and money. It is about developing and/or enhancing a spiritual relationship with God that positively influences behavior across all aspects of life.
3. It promotes principles of financial planning in a child-friendly manner. How do you budget? How do you raise money to support your budget? How do you remain within your budget? How do you save or invest? What are some best practices for shopping? How does the lordship of Christ—including the God-first principle—influence our understanding of tithing and planned giving? These and many more questions are covered in this book.
4. It is comprehensive and integrated in its approach to discipleship. What I mean is that it embraces many major themes of discipleship, such as salvation, mission, health, nurture and retention, daily devotionals and Bible study, stewardship education and practice, community service, financial intelligence, etc. Imagine all this in one book.

DS: Can you describe your own spiritual journey with regard to stewardship?

MN: I was 12 in 1970 when I got baptized. Before baptism, the elders took us through some teachings on faith and obedience. So we were expected to start tithing before we could be baptized. For a 12-year-old, obviously I had to start practicing tithing from my pocket money. Sounds old-fashioned, doesn’t it? But it really worked then. The church wanted to see a clear demonstration of spiritual growth before rushing raw con-

Disciple-making is a developmental issue and should be treated as such by all Adventist entities and members. We can’t wait until members have to struggle to unlearn bad stewardship habits.

verts through baptism. They were not in a hurry at all. People would remain in the pre-baptismal class sometimes for a year in order to gain spiritual skills such as Sabbathkeeping and tithing, to mention just a few. This culture has largely changed over the years, and some things that used to be clear as crystal are now debatable. Well, I’m now 63, and that childhood teaching and practice is still part of my DNA. Again, in 1978 I was 20. The then-Trans-Africa Division introduced stewardship education on systematic giving as a way of life. Again, I’m now 63, and this has remained my lifestyle.

DS: Describe your assessment of the importance of stewardship in the development of Christian discipleship.

MN: Stewardship principles pervade everything that goes on in the disciple-making of members, apart from just tithe and offerings. The point I’m making in this book, however, is that disciple-making is a developmental issue and should be treated as such by all Adventist entities and members. We can’t wait until members have to struggle to unlearn bad stewardship habits. This is why this book is such a valuable tool to implement disciple-making across all the stages of life. And the best time to learn new habits is during the formative stages of childhood (see Prov. 22:6 and Deut. 6:6-9), and also when one is a new convert, as this book demonstrates.

DS: How can we use the book effectively?

MN: It is suitable for family reading, since the characters in the story cut across age groups, and they are all going through learning, discovery, and transformation. As suggested by Pastor Bomfim, it can be used during family worship, helping children and parents to learn together. It can also serve as resource material for Stewardship Ministries, Sabbath School, Children’s Ministries, Pathfinders, and Education, including small-group ministries in Personal Ministries.

DS: Any final word?

MN: Many thanks to the GC Stewardship Ministries for assisting in the development, editing, and publishing of the English ebook version. Please feel free to contact me at ngwarum@sid.adventist.org or +27834607527 for more information on the hard copies, including licensing in languages other than English. 🙏



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STEWARDSHIP HONOR

1. What was the role of a steward during biblical times? What has stewardship come to mean in the modern era? Create a modern “dictionary entry” for the term.
2. Is biblical stewardship about the management of all of God’s creation? How does Psalm 50:10-12 affect your understanding of biblical stewardship? Brainstorm a list of ways that stewardship is part of daily life and not just financial gifts.
3. With regard to biblical principles, briefly describe the concept of stewardship based on the list below. What real life example can be applied to each? Use biblical references to support your answer.
 - Mind and Body
 - Environment
 - Talent
 - Time
 - Possessions

STEWARDSHIP OF MIND AND BODY:

4. In the Pathfinder pledge, we promise to be pure, kind, and true. How does following that pledge relate to the stewardship of our mind? Discuss or write your thoughts.
5. Discuss how the text found in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 relates to the stewardship of your body.

STEWARDSHIP OF ENVIRONMENT:

6. Using Genesis 2:15 as reference, choose from the list below one way that you could help to care for God’s earth.
 - Pick up trash
 - Use regular dishes instead of paper whenever possible
 - Recycle paper, plastic, and bottles
 - Use reusable bags
 - Use a reusable water bottle
 - Use paper, bamboo, or stainless



steel straws instead of plastic

- Turn off lights and appliances when you’re not using them

STEWARDSHIP OF TALENT

7. Do the following:
 - a. Read the Bible story about the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30) or 1 Corinthians 12.
 - b. How does God reward the proper usage of talents? How can we know that all of us are given talents/giftedness? Why does it seem God appreciates variety in talents?
 - c. List three talents or skills that you feel you may have or want to possess. Sketch symbols that illustrate each talent and how it could be used for God’s glory (Ephesians 4:12).
 - d. Choose one of the talents from the previous list and list or sketch three things you want to do to be a good steward and improve that specific talent.
 - e. Spend at least four hours planning and executing a community activity that uses your talents. Prepare and present the results of your project to a group. The project is to be a benefit or outreach to others and a new endeavor not previously accomplished.

STEWARDSHIP OF TIME

8. Create a list of six items you do on a nearly-daily basis. Estimate how much time you believe you spend on each item and make a list. Then, for five days, measure how much time you actually spend on those six items. Some items that can be included:
 - Personal devotions (reading the Bible and prayer)
 - Family worship (videos, shows, gaming, and other media you use)
 - Entertainment
 - Rest
 - Personal time
 - Classwork time and home study
 - Fitness activities
 - Home chores

STEWARDSHIP OF POSSESSIONS

9. Briefly describe the fundamental difference between returning the tithe and giving offerings. Include biblical references to support your answer. Bible references may include: Genesis 28:22, Leviticus 27:30, Malachi 3:8, 1 Corinthians 16:2, 2 Corinthians 9:7.
10. Discuss Malachi 3:10 and complete the following questions:
 - a. What is the storehouse?
 - b. How does the storehouse function with reference to the church at large?
 - c. What blessings are promised?
11. Interview an individual (church treasurer, stewardship coordinator, etc.) within your church that is familiar with the church budget. Include in your interview a discussion of at least the following:
 - a. How is the tithe dispersed and utilized from the local church to the local conference, union conference, division, and the General Conference?
 - b. What are some of the financial obligations that your church must meet?
 - c. How are individual funds placed in a tithe envelope allocated?

WISE STEWARD AWARD



Prepare and present your findings to a group or to your parents.

1. Find a Bible verse which tells who owns everything on earth.
2. Describe a wise steward.
3. Find, read, and explain Malachi 3:8-10.
4. Fill out your own tithe envelope and give it at church in the offering plate.
5. Make and decorate a place to keep your:
 - a. Spending money
 - b. Savings
 - c. Tithe
6. Make a poster showing some of the things Sabbath School offerings are used for.
7. Listen to the story of a widow in the Bible and her small offering.
8. Tell how and why wise stewards will care for their belongings.

IDEAS AND RESOURCES

1. Genesis 1, 2; Psalm 24:1; John 1:1-3.
2. A wise steward is responsible and



Trent Truman

- faithful to God and others. I Corinthians 4:2, I Peter 4:10.
3. The Bible says that we are to give tithes and offerings to God as a response of gratitude. He promises a special blessing for those who are faithful.
4. Enlarge your church's tithe envelope to 8 1/2 by 11 inches and help the children fill out one as they learn to give

an honest tithe and offering to Jesus.

5. Help the children understand the method and purpose of budgeting. See that every child has some money to put in the container(s) they decorate. (Children may give offering from spending money.)
6. Use magazine pictures or draw and color items that our Sabbath School offerings can buy (Bibles, Sabbath School papers, felts and pictures to illustrate Bible stories, Sabbath School meeting areas, and much more).
7. Read *Counsels on Stewardship* by Ellen G. White, pages 174-176 and then retell the story of the widow and her two mites in language that the children will understand.
8. Wise and faithful stewards will manage their lives, time, talents, and money that God has given them. ☉

“What is Stewardship and why is it so important?”



Thankfully these Adventurer Award and Pathfinder honors are here to help you understand what stewardship is and why it is so important for you to be a good steward in every aspect of your life! Don't take my word for it, jump into God's word and learn for yourself what He wants you to know about being a wise steward. It is so amazing that God calls us to manage and supervise so many important things that belong to Him, such as our bodies, our money,

our time and our talents. He blesses us with all of those things, and He asks us to manage them according to His will. I don't know about you, but that makes me feel very special and grateful. The God that created the whole world wants you and me to manage the things He has given us! Isn't that wonderful?

I pray that you will learn how you can be a wise steward in your own life and that through your stewardship you can bring honor to God. Make sure you complete each requirement and don't keep it for yourself; share what you have learned with others so they too can be good stewards!

Now say it with me!

I will go and be a good and faithful steward for God!

Andrés J. Peralta

WORLD PATHFINDER DIRECTOR

TEACHING CHILDREN FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

A Nurture and Retention Initiative

MARCOS FAIOCK BOMFIM

As parents of two children, my wife and I discovered very early how challenging and demanding the task can be of leading them to commit their lives to God. It involves far more than simply keeping them in the church. If our goal is just for them to continue attending church, we can provide sports, good food, movies, healthy interaction, and even mission trips and they will probably stay. But this doesn't necessarily mean that their affections are on God's side and that they have developed a deep, salvific relationship with Him. So, how can we help them to transfer their affections from here below to above?

We started by leading our daughters to develop the habit of putting God first

in their daily devotional habits, before any other activity. (It will be easier for children to learn this if they see their parents doing the same thing.) Family worship is also a very important initiative.

But then, the words of Jesus in Matthew 6:21 gave us an additional clue on how to attach their hearts to God and heaven: *"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also"* (NKJV). Jesus is saying here that our treasures are carriers of our affections. So, as parents, if we want to have our children's affections in heaven, we must teach them how to "carry" their treasures there.

This is the financial side of stewardship for children. Although it may not make a significant difference in the church's finances, good stewardship habits will definitely highly impact our

children's spiritual lives as well as the church's retention rates. It would be very unlikely, for instance, that our children would leave God or the church while tithing and giving what we call "Promise" (regular and systematic offering). The more they give, the more attached to God they will become!

My wife and I began financial stewardship education by teaching our daughters² to give tithe and "Promise" regularly, systematically, recognizing God as the Originator and Provider of every income, which is a blessing. We knew that we would have but a short span of time to provide the appropriate education that would lead them to a deeper relationship with their Creator and Redeemer. Financial stewardship, when rightly taught, can play a crucial role in that enterprise,



helping them, in a practical way, to see God as real!

You will find below some suggestions that my wife and I applied when teaching stewardship practices and principles to children, either in our own home and to other children in our churches:

IF YOU ARE A PARENT:

- **Start early.** Donald Crane suggests ages 6 or 7.³
- **Give them a small regular allowance.** It may be weekly for younger children and monthly for teenagers.⁴
- **Invite them to put God first** in all areas of life, starting with the daily devotional aspect, but including also their finances, highlighting God's promise for those who do it (Matt. 6:33). Teach them to give back to God after any income (by returning tithe and "Promise"). God's part must be returned before any other expense is met.
- **Teach them the concept of proportional giving.**⁵ Use the stories of Zacchaeus, the poor widow, and Ananias and Sapphira to illustrate that concept.
- **Teach them that regular/systematic offering ("Promise")⁶ is as important as the tithe** (Mal. 3:8-10).
- **Share your experience** about "Promise" with them. If you are a Promisor, you will certainly have many evidences of God's supernatural action in your behalf.
- **Watch videos**⁷ about the "Promise" concept with them.
- **Lead them to vow**⁸ a specific percentage of their income to be regularly given as offering. Do it in a solemn way, perhaps during the family worship, and pray with them after they commit to regularly give a regular offering as "Promise." You may use a Commitment Card⁹ adapted especially for children.
- **Allow them to start low** so that they may grow. Give them free-

dom, not forcing them to start at higher percentages for their "Promise" offering. You may suggest to them to start at a lower percentage, planning to grow it later. (I have increased that percentage many times.) Gently lead them to grow in their giving, respecting their pace in their experience with God.

- **Renew their vows regularly.** Once a year during the family worship (usually on New Year's Eve or Thanksgiving), you can conduct a renewal-of-vows ceremony, following all the points of the Commitment Card.¹⁰ (See below). This should lead your children to put God first in all areas of life.
- **Give them a tithe envelope.** Teach

GOD FIRST

I PROMISE:

- SPEND TIME** talking to Jesus when I first wake up every day.
- Ask Jesus to help me **FORGIVE** and **LOVE** others because it can be really hard.
- Choose **HEALTHY HABITS** so I can listen to God's voice.
- TELL** all my friends and family about Jesus.
- Make **SABBATH** extra special by getting ready.
- Faithfully **RETURN** God's **TITHE** which is 10% of whatever income He **FIRST** gives to me.
- PROMISE** a percentage (___ %) of my income as regular offering.

WITH GOD'S HELP: _____ DATE: _____

STEWARDSHIP MINISTRIES

them how to calculate the respective percentages of their income for tithe and Promise, and how to fill out the envelope.

- **Pray with them during the family worship,** presenting their filled envelopes before God.

If you are a pastor or Children's Ministry educator, also consider the following suggestions:

- **Create opportunities to teach** the "Promise" concept. In cooperation

with the respective leaders, go to the children's Sabbath School, children's choir, or Pathfinder meetings to promote the idea of "Promise."

- **Regularly promote renewal-of-vows ceremonies,** leading children to put God first in all areas of life. Calls are a very important part of the decision-making process. I became a Promisor when I was a teenager, during a call to vow a percentage to give as Promise, made by my church's pastor.
- **Lead them to vow a specific percentage** of their income as "Promise," beyond the tithe. Use the Commitment Cards. Do it in a very solemn way.
- **Make the event meaningful.** Each Sabbath, provide a solemn moment during the offering collection, specifically inviting children to bring their "Promise" envelopes.

Like me, are you planning to meet your children in heaven? By applying Jesus' treasure/affection principle we will certainly increase our chances to accomplish this dream!



Pastor Marcos F. Bomfim is director of Stewardship Ministries at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States.

¹ Find more about "Promise" (proportional regular giving) in <https://stewardship.adventist.org/promise-offerings>.

² On the following playlist, look for videos #35 and #43 to see some of my daughters' experiences with offerings: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL1q_Qim1x79DFtBw-xH7isWV9WHdzkyga.

³ *Family Finance Seminar*. PDF file. 1984.

⁴ Idem.

⁵ Find more about "Promise" (proportional regular giving) in <https://stewardship.adventist.org/promise-offerings>.

⁶ Idem.

⁷ Find videos about "Promise" here: <https://stewardship.adventist.org/videos-on-promise>.

⁸ Find more about vows or pledges here: <https://stewardship.adventist.org/vows-and-pledges-resources>.

⁹ Find a Commitment Card for Children here: <https://stewardship.adventist.org/simplified-children-commitment-card.pdf>. (See card above)

¹⁰ Idem.

A COSTLY GIFT

DENNIS CARLSON

A newborn baby is cause for much celebration in families around the world. Most parents love their children and are willing to sacrifice almost anything for their physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. Nevertheless, parents rarely consider all that is required to raise a child to responsible adulthood.

Let's look at child-rearing from an accountant's point of view. If the child is born in late December, U.S. tax law allows an income tax deduction for the whole previous year. But I don't always think like an accountant, and U.S. tax law was not the first thing that came to mind when my wife informed me that our daughter was on the way. Still, the news of a coming child did start me thinking about all the things that would be needed as the child grew. Education was one of those things.

RAISING A CHILD

Here is the latest released (2015) U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) estimate of the cost to raise a child to adulthood: <https://www.usda.gov/media/blog/2017/01/13/cost-raising-child>. The cost (\$233,610) includes housing, food, transportation, clothing, childcare, education, health care, and other miscellaneous items. Not included is higher education. For Seventh-day Adventist families there is the added cost of private Christian elementary, middle school, and high school education.



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For Christian parents, Christian education is an important part of parenting for their children. If the parents do not plan for the cost early in the child's life, they will be financially unprepared when the need arises. Children can work and save their money to make at least a small contribution. Research shows that children who work as well as study do better academically than those who do not work. Yet student work alone will not be enough to pay for tuition without incurring significant debt.

SHARING THE BURDEN

One way to start a college fund for a child is to let friends and family know that you are opening a college savings account before the child is born. Gifts given for the child's education can be

deposited into a savings account. As the child grows, parents can let their children know about the college fund. They can encourage the child to save and also contribute money they receive to the fund from an early age.

As children grow older, teaching them to invest in the college fund can be a good way to introduce your child to personal financial planning. Teaching them to pray and ask God to guide their investment decisions will let them know that God cares about all areas of their lives, even their finances. When they get their monthly statements, you can point out to them that God is blessing their investments even while they are sleeping. *"It is useless to work so hard for a living, getting up early and going to bed late. For the Lord provides for those he loves, while they are asleep"* (Ps. 127:2).*

As noted above, the cost of higher

education for your child is not included in the cost of raising a child to adulthood. A child attending college will need ready access to a considerable sum of money to pay tuition. For many families that means student loans.

THE BIG LOAN . . . LOAD!

Do you understand what 1 trillion is? Let me try to make this number relevant. One trillion is a 1 with 12 zeros after it. The 100 dollar bill is the largest printed currency currently available in the United States. A stack of 100 of these bills would be valued at \$10,000. One hundred of these stacks equal 1 million dollars. One hundred thousand of these stacks equal 1 billion dollars; 100 million of these stacks are valued at 1 trillion dollars. To illustrate this visually, four 2-meter-high shipping pallets of these stacks equal 1 billion dollars. Five thousand of those pallets would be valued at 1 trillion dollars.

In the United States, the total student loan debt in early 2021 stood at \$1.7 trillion. I hope that you can now relate to the horror of what that number represents. It works out to an average of \$38,500 per student (45 million students with loans). It is growing at six times the rate of the U.S. economy. The Bible tells us, “Poor people are slaves of the rich. Borrow money and you are the lender’s slave” (Prov. 22:7). No loving parent looking into the trusting eyes of their newborn baby would intentionally make them a slave. (You can see the debt growth in the United States at <https://www.usdebtclock.org/>.)

So why do Seventh-day Adventist students in the U.S. go so deeply in debt for higher education? How does that debt affect the mission of the Adventist Church? The cost to the student of private higher education is four times higher than the cost of public higher education. If a student goes to a Seventh-day Adventist university and marries another student also attending, and they both have student loans equaling the aver-

age, they could jointly owe more than \$77,000. Starting their lives together with such debt dictates that they cannot afford to be available to God for mission. They are slaves to the lender and unavailable to God.

“The most essential education for our youth today to gain, and that which will fit them for the higher grades of the school above, is an education that will teach them how to reveal the will of God to the world. To neglect this phase of their training, and to bring into our schools a worldly method, is to bring loss to both teachers and students.”

“Be under obligation to no one—the only obligation you have is to love one another. Whoever does this has obeyed the Law” (Rom. 13:8).

STEWARDSHIP EDUCATION

Parents can teach tithing and the giving of offerings by letting children turn in the envelope for the family at church. In larger families, the offering activity can be shared. As the child starts to receive small amounts of money, they can turn in their own tithe and offering envelope. Parents will need to plan to help their children, but the children are never too young to learn to trust in God. The child can be taught that God owns everything

and that they are stewards of God’s possessions.

When the child starts to work for pay, parents and mentors can teach the three pillars of personal financial planning by helping them learn to give, save, and budget their spending. They can give to God, save in the college fund, and plan for purchases. This will acquaint the child with the ideas of trusting God, going to college, and providing for themselves through work.

As the child becomes a teenager and starts to earn wages, the concepts learned in childhood can be cemented with continued practice. Planning for your children in all areas of their life by passing on your faith and values is the most important planned gift that you can give to your children. It is vital for their success in life and their faith in God. This gift is more valuable than your possessions given only at the end of life.

CONCLUSION

Parents starting to plan from the birth of their child for their future education costs can help their children avoid becoming slaves to anyone but God. One of the most important gifts that parents can give their children is to plan for them to graduate debt free. That gift takes planning and sacrifice on the part of the parents, and hard work both academically and financially on the part of the student.

Furthermore, if parents have planned well to educate their children to have faith in God, then they will be trustworthy, faithful, and prudent when they inherit some of the possessions God has entrusted to them during their lifetime. Your children will keep those possessions working for God and supporting God’s mission. 🍎



Dennis Carlson is director of Trust Services for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

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PAUL H. DOUGLAS

The success of an organization can be attributed to the effectiveness of its controls. Enabling this effectiveness is the *organizational culture* intentionally developed and nurtured by leaders that promotes an appreciation and application of *organizational controls*. These controls include policies and procedures that collectively are referred to as internal control and are needed to reasonably assure the objectives of producing reliable financial reports, performing operations effectively and efficiently, and complying with applicable laws and regulations.¹

Internal control is only able to reasonably assure the aforementioned objectives of an organization because of the limitations that exist in designing and implementing a system of internal control. Limitations include the problem of costs versus benefits, the possibility of collusion among employees, and the potential for management to override the same controls they were instrumental in designing. However, those limitations do not provide excuses for an organization failing to design and implement an appropriate system of internal control given its size and complexity. In fact, Ellen White reinforces the import of this matter by stating: “For evils that we might have checked, we are just as responsible as if we were guilty of the acts ourselves.”²

The financial policies of the Seventh-day Adventist Church require each organization within the family of entities to have a system of internal control that is appropriately designed, documented, implemented, communicated, and is monitored by the highest level of governance in that organization.³ With management and governance of an organization collaborating to comply with what the financial policies require, it will be important to recognize that shared religious beliefs can provide a false sense of comfort regarding internal control. Religious organizations are at greater risk to experience impairing effects on the

BUILDING CONFIDENCE

The Role of Organizational Controls

design and operation of their internal control because of a propensity to extend trust within the organization at the expense of oversight. Put more bluntly, religion in the workplace can create the environment for fraud to develop.⁴

THE PRINCIPLES

There are 17 principles that guide an organization in its design and implementation of an effective system of internal control. For internal control to be effective, these principles need to be both present

COMPONENTS OF INTERNAL CONTROL	PRINCIPLES OF INTERNAL CONTROL
Control Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The organization demonstrates a commitment to integrity and ethical values. ■ The board of directors demonstrates independence from management and exercises oversight of the development and performance of internal control. ■ With board oversight, management establishes structures, reporting lines, and appropriate authorities and responsibilities in the pursuit of objectives. ■ The organization demonstrates a commitment to attract, develop, and retain competent individuals in alignment with objectives. ■ The organization holds individuals accountable for their internal control responsibilities in the pursuit of objectives.
Risk Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The organization specifies objectives with sufficient clarity to enable the identification and assessment of risks relating to objectives. ■ The organization identifies risks to the achievement of its objectives across the entity and analyzes risks as a basis for determining how the risks should be managed. ■ The organization considers the potential for fraud in assessing risks to the achievement of objectives. ■ The organization identifies and assesses changes that could significantly impact the system of internal control.
Control Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The organization selects and develops control activities that contribute to the mitigation of risks to the achievement of objectives to acceptable levels. ■ The organization selects and develops general control activities over technology to support the achievement of objectives. ■ The organization deploys control activities through policies that establish what is expected and procedures that put policies into place.
Information and Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The organization obtains or generates and uses relevant, quality information to support the functioning of internal control. ■ The organization internally communicates information, including objectives and responsibilities for internal control, necessary to support the functioning of internal control. ■ The organization communicates with external parties regarding matters affecting the functioning of internal control.
Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The organization selects, develops, and performs ongoing and/or separate evaluations to ascertain whether the components of internal control are present and functioning. ■ The organization evaluates and communicates internal control deficiencies in a timely manner to those parties responsible for taking corrective action, including senior management and the board of directors, as appropriate.

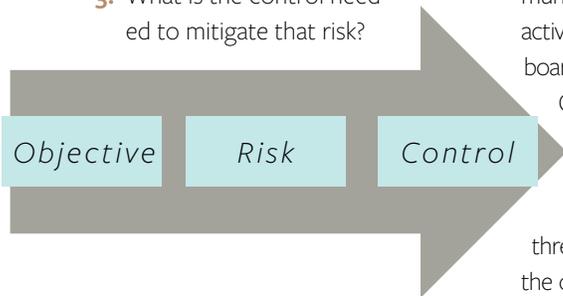
and functioning in an organization. The following table summarizes the 17 principles as grouped to the relevant component of internal control:

THE PROCESS

To facilitate the process of designing and implementing internal control, an organization may utilize checklists to reveal risk areas to be addressed and develop flowcharts and diagrams to document a response to the risk areas identified. The *Seventh-day Adventist Accounting Manual* dedicates an entire chapter to internal control and provides useful checklists in the appendix to assist management and governing boards in their collaborative effort.

Although the effort to design appropriate internal control that is adequate to the size and complexity of an organization may seem daunting, the process can be reduced to a sequence of three simple questions:

1. What is the objective?
2. What is the risk that the objective may not be achieved?
3. What is the control needed to mitigate that risk?



The first question relates to the three objectives of internal control—those being to reasonably assure reliable financial reports are produced, operations are performing effectively and efficiently, and there is compliance with applicable laws and regulations. Determining the risk that any or all of these objectives may not be achieved requires management and governing boards to identify and implement the most appropriate control to mitigate that risk. The menu of controls available to implement include having adequate segregation of duties, proper

authorization of transactions, adequate documents and records, physical control over assets and records, and independent checks on performance. In selecting segregation of duties as the control to mitigate risk, it must be remembered that the same person should not be able to *initiate*

“For evils that we might have checked, we are just as responsible as if we were guilty of the acts ourselves.”

—Ellen G. White

the transaction, *authorize* the transaction, *record* the transaction, while at the same time have *custody* of the asset being used to fulfill the transaction.

Engaging in the ongoing process of ensuring that internal control is appropriately designed, documented, implemented, communicated, and monitored is an essential activity for management and governing boards seeking to be faithful stewards of God’s resources. To illustrate that engaging in this process can be less daunting that it may appear to be, an example of how to apply the sequence of three questions is provided below toward the objective of reasonably assuring reliable financial reports:

OBJECTIVE?	RISK?	CONTROL
Prepare a monthly financial statement for use by the management and board.	Amounts paid for expenses may be reflected in the financial statement but not be valid.	Each transaction must be supported by original documentation and authorized by person before payment.

LOOKING FORWARD

So far in this series of articles we have examined how the attitudes and actions of steward leaders play an essential role in promoting organizational stewardship, explored the important role of organizational culture



in building the currency of confidence, and examined the principles and process of internal control that is required for every church organization. In the next article, financial oversight committees will be addressed as another aspect of *organizational controls* and the role they play in building confidence inside and outside the organization. 🟡



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¹ ISA 265 promulgated by the International Auditing and Assurance Board (IAASB) at <https://www.ifac.org/system/files/downloads/ao15-2010-iaasb-handbook-isa-265.pdf>.
² Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1940), p. 441.
³ *General Conference Working Policy*, S 04.
⁴ C. P. Koerber and C. P. Neck (2006), “Religion in the Workplace: Implications for Financial Fraud and Organizational Decision Making,” *Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion* 3 (March 2015): pp. 305-318.
⁵ Internal Control—Integrated Framework (2013), www.coso.org.

⁶ The *Seventh-day Adventist Accounting Manual* is available for download at https://www.gcasconnect.org/assets/files/manuals/SDAAM_Jan_2011_Final.pdf.

WHY THE BIG INTEREST IN INTEREST?

JENIPHER CHITATE

For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money. . . . But his lord answered and said to him, . . . 'So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest'" (Matt. 25:14-26).

This parable captures the essence of stewardship: profitable and faithful management of the talents and resources entrusted to us. From reading the Bible, it is clear that the lending of money for interest was a common practice in ancient times. The Bible provides several lessons on the subject of interest. We are expected to manage resources wisely (invest with an eye to generating interest, avoid collecting unfair interest from the poor and needy, and avoid paying unnecessary interest by avoiding debt).

Last quarter's article focused on getting out of debt using 1 Kings as an object lesson. Debt and interest are highly interconnected topics. This quarter we will share some basic concepts that will help boost your financial literacy in regard to



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interest. We agree that "in the current economic environment of low interest rates and low growth, . . . it is important that everybody has the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to improve their financial outcomes and well-being."¹

ASSESSING FINANCIAL LITERACY

As an entry point to the subject, it would be appropriate to lead church members in an assessment of their basic financial literacy. It has been established that financial literacy has a direct bearing on an individual's financial well-being.²

According to Stolper and Walter,³ there are three questions widely accepted as the "Big Three" indicators of financial literacy. Below, we present two of these questions, which can be used as a self-assessment:

1. Suppose you had \$100 in a savings account and the interest rate was 2% per year. After five years, how much do you think you would have in the account if you left the money in there to grow? The answer is:
 - More than \$102.
 - Exactly \$102.
 - Less than \$102.
 - Do not know.

2. Imagine that the interest rate on your savings account was 1% per year and inflation was 2% per year. After one year, would you be able to buy:
 - more than,
 - exactly the same as, or
 - less than you could buy today with the money in this account?

- Do not know.⁴

We have chosen these two questions because, according to Stolper and Walter,⁵ individuals who cannot answer both these questions are likely to make suboptimal financial decisions. If you feel you fail the test, please read on! This article will help boost your knowledge of interest.

According to data from a survey conducted by the OECD International Network on Financial Education, many people do not have sound knowledge of interest and struggle applying basic interest-rate concepts when making financial decisions.⁶ The survey results are significant as they represent findings of data collected from 30 countries encompassing "Africa, Asia, Europe, Australasia, North America and South America."⁷

A USEFUL GLOSSARY

The meaning of several expressions related to interest in both specialized and promotional documentations are not clear for many individuals. As a result, important elements are overlooked, resulting in poor decisions.

WHAT IS INTEREST?

Basically, interest represents the cost of borrowing money; to a lender it represents income generated by lending money. Interest has many facets, and we will uncover some of these.

FIXED VERSUS VARIABLE INTEREST

Interest rates can be fixed or variable. A fixed rate is fixed over the term of the loan or investment. A mortgage with a 5% fixed rate over a five-year term,

means the interest rate will always be calculated on the outstanding balance at a rate of 5%. A mortgage with a variable rate is quoted as a premium or discount of an established rate, such as a lender's prime rate. As an example, the premium or discount rate remains static (does not change); however, the prime rate can and usually does fluctuate, resulting in variable rates. The choice of selecting a variable versus fixed rate is not an easy one and is influenced by many things, including an individual's ability to accept risk and fluctuating payments.

NOMINAL VERSUS REAL INTEREST

Nominal Interest rate refers to the rate of interest that is advertised. If during the year an investment generated 5% interest, the 5% is referred to as the nominal rate. This rate can be deceiving because it is not the real rate of interest. The real rate of interest takes into effect what is called the inflation rate. In our example, if inflation during the year was 2%, the real interest rate is just 3%. Most world economies have inflation targets and generally acknowledge that over time, we should experience some level of inflation. Inflation, according to *Webster's New World Dictionary* is "an increase in the amount of money in circulation resulting in . . . the fall of its value and a rise in prices."⁸ We all agree that a dollar today buys much less than it did 20 years ago. We can therefore say the value—or purchasing power—of money has decreased over time. This concept is extremely important when it comes to managing investments and retirement planning.

SIMPLE INTEREST VERSUS COMPOUNDED INTEREST

Simple interest refers to the calculation of interest based solely on the principal. On the other hand, compounded interest is calculated on the principal, plus the interest. Before signing a contract en-

tailoring interest, it is important that you understand whether the interest rate will be compounded or be based on simple interest rate. Compounded interest is a double-edged sword. It works in your favour if you are an investor as you earn interest on the interest. If you are the borrower, however, this can harm you financially, especially if you cannot afford payments to fully cover interest charges. You will end up paying interest on top of interest.

WHAT DOES GOD EXPECT FROM US?

The Bible recognizes the downside of interest and how this cost acts as a hindrance to getting out of debt. There are numerous verses, including Exodus 22:25; Deuteronomy 23:19, 20; and Proverbs 28:8 that forbid the charging of interest to poor individuals.

On the other hand, there is a recognition of interest as an avenue for growing wealth. In the story of the master who gave talents to his workers, the master says the one with one talent could have at least invested to earn interest (Matt. 25:27). There is also an expectation that a wise steward will not just let money sit in the bank but will seek wise avenues to invest and generate interest.

Finally! We hope reading this article has equipped you to share about the

multifaceted nature of interest. Correct understanding of the topic is crucial to financial literacy and the exercise of proper stewardship of our God-provided resources. Research shows that increasing financial knowledge results in reduction of poverty and increased wealth.⁹ Why not make a commitment today to invest in more knowledge of this subject for yourself and for the benefits of communities? 🌟

Jenifer Chitate

- ¹ OECD (2016), OECD/INFE International survey of adult Financial Literacy competencies, Paris: OECD
- ² M. Khalil (2020), "Financial citizenship as a broader democratic context of financial literacy," *Citizenship, Social and Economics Education*, pp. 1-14.
- ³ O. A. Stolper and A. Walter (2017), "Financial literacy, financial advice, and financial behavior," *Journal of Business Economics*, pp. 581-643.
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- ⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 3.
- ⁸ Simon and Schuster (1980), *Webster's New World Dictionary*, New York: New World Dictionaries/ Simon and Schuster, p. 722.
- ⁹ M. Khalil (2020), "Financial citizenship as a broader democratic context of financial literacy," *Citizenship, Social and Economics Education*, pp. 1-14.

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LERATO AND HER MONEY QUESTIONS:

Making Child Disciples Who Understand God and Money

by Michael Rugube Ngwaru. Born in Cape Town, South Africa, he's been married to Elizabeth Ngwaru since 1983. He holds a BA in Theology and an MBA. He also has a certificate in Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies from Harvard University. Michael has served the church since 1978. At the time of publishing this book, Michael served as the Personal Ministries director of the Southern Africa Indian-Ocean Division. He loves educating through storytelling.



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In the footsteps of the Master Teacher, Michael Ngwaru creatively uses stories to share life lessons with kids. Going beyond superficial money talks, this book addresses creating and managing wealth to grow disciples for God's kingdom. In these pages, parents and spiritual educators have a reliable toolbox to build up our loved ones for an abundant life. Thanks and blessings to Michael and many others who invest in passing Him on.

Topics include "Is Jesus a Beggar?" "What is the Difference Between Returning and Paying Tithe?" "Why Give and Not Return Offerings?" and "How Do I Avoid Spending Above My Budget?"

