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**From the Selected Works of Jacques B. Doukhan**

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January, 2012

# A Time to Gain and a Time to Lose

Jacques R. Doukhan, *Andrews University*



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# DYNAMIC Steward

living • submitting • abiding • giving

January-March, 2012

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Volume 16 ■ Number 1

**What am I doing  
with *His* Time?**



# DYNAMIC Steward



My all in response to God's all!

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12501 Old Columbia Pike  
Silver Spring, MD 20904 USA  
Tel: +1 301-680-6157  
Fax: +1 301-680-6155

gcstewardship@gc.adventist.org  
www.AdventistStewardship.com

EDITOR: Larry R. Evans  
EvansL@gc.adventist.org

ASSISTANT EDITOR:  
Penny Brink

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT:  
Johnetta B. Flomo

#### CONTRIBUTING EDITORS:

Andrei Arfanidi  
James Badu  
William Bagambe  
Paolo Benini  
Micah Choga  
Kwon JohngHaeng  
Marapaka Joseph  
Raafat Kamal  
Wendell Mandolang  
John Mathews  
Javier Mejía Mejía  
Mario Niño  
Miguel Pinheiro  
Erika Puni

EDITOR'S NOTES: The articles in this publication have been revised slightly or updated to conform to the intended audience and nature of the *Dynamic Steward*.

## inside ds

The phenomenal earning power of Michael Jordan, the famed professional basketball player in the United States, has shocked even sportswriters. It has been reported that Jordan's endorsements, the year after his second retirement, profited him twice as much as what all U.S. presidents earned for all their terms combined! In fact, he earned more endorsing Nike shoes than all the workers in Malaysia who made the shoes. Furthermore, he may pay \$200 for a round of golf, but he earns \$33,390 while playing that round. While we greatly admire his athletic abilities, we have to wonder about a society that seems so out of balance. It is no wonder that, for some, sports has become the "god" of this age.



Larry R. Evans  
Associate Director,  
GC Stewardship  
Ministries

Our world seems to place a lot of value upon what one earns. Incomes, houses, clothing, the cars we drive and the homes we live in are often compared at the envy of some and the chagrin of others. How ironic that Jesus, the Creator and Owner of all, saw it differently. The timeless truth behind the story of the widow and her two copper coins is not found in the value of her earning power nor even in how she saved the money she did have. Jesus was not even contrasting the size of her offering with that of others who announced their large offerings. Rather, Jesus saw what few did. He saw deep inside her heart. There he found a generosity that was unmatched by those around her. This generosity was of greater value to Him than her offerings or those offerings that seemed to tilt the prideful scales of public awe. Jesus had a way of seeing and valuing things differently than we do.

Henry David Thoreau once observed that men do not ride on trains—trains ride on them. Strange but true! He explained to his skeptics that the ties and rails on which the train moves represent a portion of the lives of the men who laid them. Therefore, the train actually travels over the lives of these men. The two coins of the widow, the offerings we return to the Lord, the time we give to our family, our job and that which we volunteer, all represent our life. It is no wonder that Paul writes, "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship" (Rom. 12:1, NIV). Time can easily slip through our fingers like sand, but it doesn't have to. Generosity needs to be part of our time management but how that generosity is expressed is what stewardship is all about. We must remember that time equals life and our life reveals our values. Ultimately we must ask, "What am I doing with His time?"

This quarter's *Dynamic Steward* focuses on the gift of time. Allow these insightful and practical articles to inform, inspire and empower your walk with Christ. The concept article by **Erika Puni** opens the door for that journey. **Pardon Mwansa** in the "Stewardship of Time" and **Rafaat Kamal** in "The Value of Time" remind us of our spiritual privilege and responsibility when it comes to using our time. **Jacques Douhkan** will challenge you with the wisdom of Solomon as you reconsider God's gift of time. Our young adults won't be disappointed with the insights provided by **Geoffrey Marshall**, and **Delbert Pearman** puts our Annual Week of Sacrifice into historical perspective. When all is said and done, consider the words from one of our suggested resource books, "Stewardship is the path. Generosity is the adventure" (*The Genius of Generosity*, p. 96).

Blessings,

*Larry R. Evans*  
Editor

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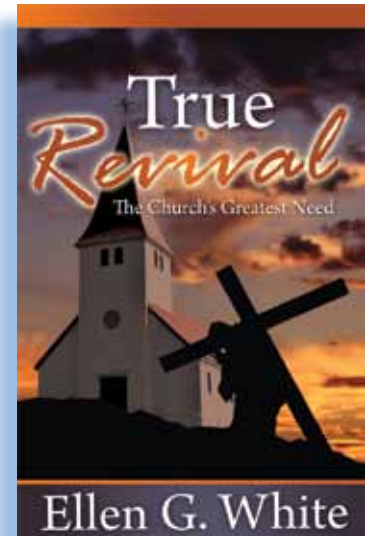
# resources

Perhaps you've been praying to experience the power of the Holy Spirit and the latter rain. Get ready to have your prayers answered, because Jesus is coming soon!

This volume collects Ellen White's most important writings on revival. She helps us distinguish between true and false revival, and how revival reveals itself in our Christian walk.

Can you imagine how revival will change your church? Could it be that you will be one through whom God will do something special? Why not give Him a chance?

***True Revival, The Church's Greatest Need*, by Ellen G. White. Review & Herald Publishing Association. Available at Adventist Book Centers.**

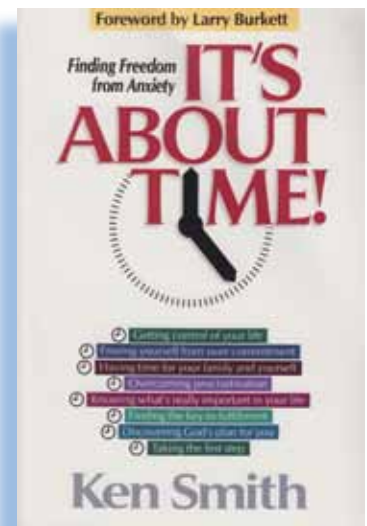


Anxiety. Over commitment. Procrastination. Are these holding you back? Do you feel that there just aren't enough hours in the day to get everything done? Then this book is for you. President Emeritus of World Vision, Ted. W Engstrom, says, "I am delighted with this helpful Biblical treatise on using our time in a redemptive, pro-active mode."

Author, Ken Smith has served as Attorney, Judge, Author, Radio Host, Teacher, and Counselor. He founded Christian Stewardship Ministries in 1982, and now develops materials and teaches around the country on time and money management, and personal organization. Ken and his wife, Pat, have four children and thirteen grandchildren.

***It's About Time!* By Ken Smith. 1992.\* Christian Stewardship Ministries: <http://www.csmin.org/resources/index.aspx>.**

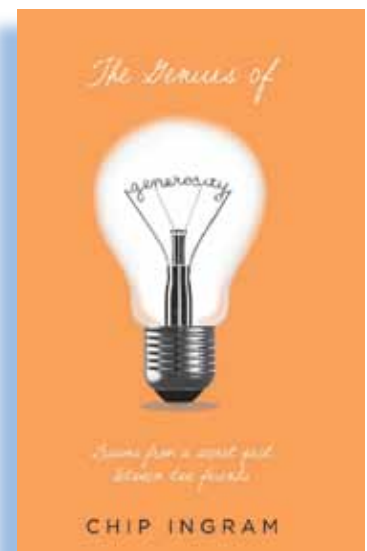
*\* Permission has been obtained by the GC Stewardship Ministries department for this publication to be translated, through the respective Division Stewardship departments. Contact [brinkp@gc.adventist.org](mailto:brinkp@gc.adventist.org), should you be interested in this option.*



*Genius of Generosity* is the latest resource provided by Generous Church. One key to intimacy with God is generosity. It's so simple, it's genius. Generous living is attracting to an unbelieving world, especially in turbulent economic times. With church and family budgets stretched, how do you spur on generosity in your church? *Genius of Generosity* provides new, inexpensive tools to help you teach stewardship and generosity.

Chip Ingram is Senior Pastor of Venture Christian Church in Los Gatos, CA and President of Living on the Edge, a teaching and discipleship ministry that provides practical help for everyday believers. He has a unique ability to communicate truth and winsomely challenge people to live out their faith. He has served as a pastor for more than 25 years and as president of Walk Thru the Bible. The author of 12 books, Chip reaches more than a million people each week on radio and television worldwide. Chip and his wife, Theresa, have four adult children and six grandchildren.

***The Genius of Generosity, Lessons from a Secret Pact Between Friends*, by Chip Ingram. The Generous Church, [www.generouschurch.com](http://www.generouschurch.com).**



Disclaimer: The publishers of *Dynamic Steward* advocate resources on the basis of their rich contributions to the area of stewardship ministry, and assume that readers will apply their own critical evaluations as they make use of them.



## All For Jesus



**Erika F. Puni**  
*Director,  
General Conference Stewardship  
Ministries*

Celebrating the life of a loved one in death.... It seemed such a contradiction. It was only a few days into the New Year (2012), and here we all were in church, where I, as a pastor and friend of the family, was invited to present an appropriate message of hope and encouragement to all in attendance. Many members of the extended family were not Seventh-day Adventist Christians. The deceased, a mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother, had lived for over ninety-three years and passed away only a few months before she turned ninety-four.

I began the eulogy by reading this verse from the Scriptures, “Our days may come to seventy years, or eighty, if our strength endures; yet the best of them are but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away” Psalms 90:10 (NIV). Here was my point: “She lived her life to the full, and she gave all of her life (time) to God.” As Christian stewards, we recognize that time is a gift of God, and that we are charged with the sacred responsibility of living it, and using all of it, for His glory (1 Cor.10:3).

### Time of Birth

In my family, we celebrate our children’s birthdays in November (Janae-Grace) and December (Jaydon), and it is our family custom, on these special occasions, to first acknowledge God as the Giver of Life. We do this during our family worship-time, but we also put money aside as an offering of thanksgiving to be given on the following Sabbath, in recognition of God’s sustenance and the blessings of good health. While this idea of remembering God during birthday times may be obvious for most Christians, it is nevertheless important that we restate this Christian understanding in today’s materialistic world. We need to constantly remind ourselves of this Biblical fact: it is God who gives life (Gen. 1:1).

Job, a worshipper of Yahweh, in his time of trial and loss, recognized the sovereignty of God and His ownership of everything by declaring, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised” (Job 1:21, NIV). Notwithstanding the context of Job being a very rich man, his testimony highlights a fundamental principle of stewardship: God owns everything, including life. Moreover, from the day we are born, there is nothing we receive or possess that belongs to us. Everything we are and have in this world is God’s. Time, whether it is measured in seconds or years, is a gift of the Creator God.

### Time for Living

By accepting time as God’s gift, we also accept our God-given responsibility, the stewardship of time which implies good time-management. This emphasis on the use of time as a spiritual discipline of the Christian life is powerfully presented by Solomon the “Preacher” in this way, “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the realm of the dead, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom” (Ecc. 9:10, NIV). The point of this Biblical passage is clear. Because this life is finite and brief, we humans and people of God must, therefore, take advantage of every moment we have in life to do all that we can before we die. However, our personal “doing” and living over time must be informed by the rule of Jesus Christ—the awareness that we live for Him—and in the presence of God (Ecc. 11:9).

The question that follows is, “How does this message of maximizing time translate into ways of actually living today?” For me, it means appropriating and spending more time with my family—my wife (Maxine) and my two children. As a PK (pastor’s kid), I am very aware of how pastors can become so committed to, and involved in, their ministry that there’s very little time left to spend with their immediate families. Setting time aside on a daily basis for our family is good stewardship.

### Time and Death

The apostle Paul, towards the end of his life and ministry, made this wonderful, conclusive statement: “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21, NIV). When looking at these words in the context of his life and the time he gave freely to the service of God, Paul seems to be saying that there’s no other purpose for living except to live for Jesus Christ; and even in the matter of death he considers that too a “gain” because of Christ. For Paul, life finds its true meaning in Christ—the Way, the Truth, and the Life. And it is this unfaltering faith in God’s leading in

his life—all of the time—that gave Paul the courage to face suffering and death without fear. The basis for such confidence is Christ Himself who has conquered death and the grave (Rev. 1:17,18).

To the New Testament church at Smyrna, Jesus said, “Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor’s crown” (Rev. 2:10, NIV). The call to be faithful to God to the very end of time or to the point of death stills hold true for Christian stewards today. Following Jesus as Savior and Lord from birth to death is a lifetime calling. It is a total commitment of heart and life, 24/7. It’s all for Jesus. And when He comes, will He find us faithful stewards?

## stewardship window

news from the  
director’s desk ...

### GC joins NAD Stewardship Ministries in Tampa, Florida

John Mathews  
(NAD  
Stewardship  
Ministries  
Director), right,  
introduces GC  
Stewardship  
Ministries  
personnel: Larry  
Evans (Associate  
Director), left,  
and Erika Puni  
(Director), center,  
at a seminar  
called: *The  
Hard Questions  
Answered*.



January 18, 2012 was an important date for the North American Division (NAD) Stewardship Ministries. This was the date for their advisory of this quinquennium. The advisory was conducted in conjunction with the NAD Ministries Convention (January 15-18), a biennial event, which showcases all of the ministries of this division, and provides cutting-edge ministry tools and ideas for the benefit of local pastors and congregations. The Stewardship advisory was under the leadership of Dr. John Mathews, NAD Stewardship Ministries Director, assisted by Ms. Lori Bryan, NAD Stewardship Ministries Administrative Assistant. The focus of the meeting was the relationship between “heart and treasure.” It brought together 35 participants, most of whom are stewardship educators and directors from Conferences and Unions in the NAD, as well as from the Division and the General Conference. In addition to the advisory, the NAD Stewardship Ministries also hosted a number of stewardship seminars and break-out groups during the convention. This included one called “The Hard Stewardship Questions Answered,” led by the GC Stewardship Ministries team.



Participants at the seminar and Associate Director, Mario Niño, at the GC Stewardship Ministries Booth.



## Our President Affirms Stewardship



**Ted N.C. Wilson**  
*President, Seventh-day Adventist  
World Church*

**T**ed Wilson is a great advocate of Biblical Stewardship. Larry Evans, Editor of the *Dynamic Steward* and Associate Director for GC Stewardship Ministries, draws out his thoughts on this vital topic:

**LRE:** When you speak about stewardship, what comes to mind?

**TNCW:** Stewardship is one of the most important aspects of a Christian's experience and goes far beyond financial management. Christian stewardship has to do with the discipline of our lives in accordance with God's Word and the power of the Holy Spirit enabling us to become more and more like Jesus. Christian Stewardship involves a disciplined use of time, and in so doing guides how we will go about our activities, directs how we use our abilities and manage the resources God has placed in our hands. Stewardship is really a lot about priorities: time, talent, abilities, and, of course, personal finances. Because of our connection with the Lord, it helps us know how to get through life and be a blessing to others.

**LRE:** You feel, then, that stewardship flows out of that total commitment to Christ including but not limited to financial concerns?

**TNCW:** Absolutely. It's our response to God's incredible love for us.

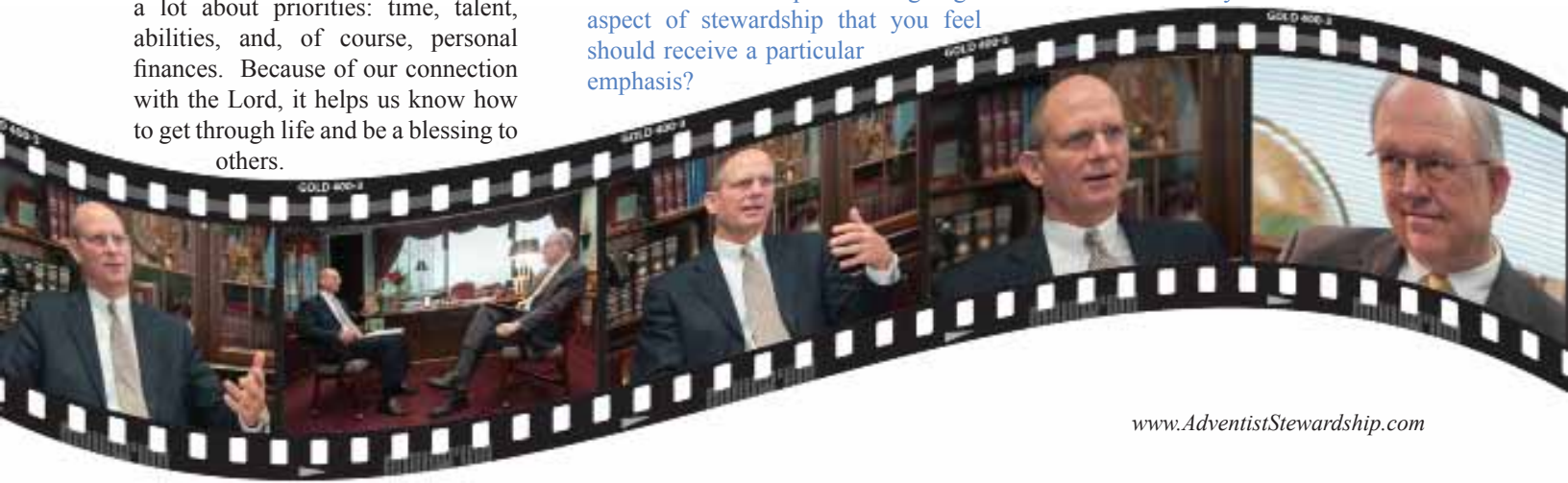
**LRE:** What counsel would you give for pastors in the local churches?

**TNCW:** I would certainly encourage every pastor to be focused on ways in which to bring the subject of stewardship to the forefront. Pastors do a large disservice if they believe that stewardship is something to be left to only private conversations. It is an important factor in guiding the spiritual experience of others. Helping members know how to recognize and respond to the resources God has given to them is part of the spiritual growth experience. Tithing is God's plan. This is not the General Conference's plan. This is God's plan, from the Bible! It is simply 10 percent. The principle is absolutely the same whether the person has very humble and modest means or if they have been blessed financially. It's not the amount; it is the response. I would encourage pastors to be very proactive in helping church members understand this larger picture of what stewardship is all about and to publicly encourage faithful giving to the Lord.

**LRE:** Soon after your election as president of the General Conference, you expressed your desire to strengthen the stewardship emphasis around the world. You specifically asked that there would be individuals at different levels of the church who would give their full attention to stewardship. Why did you feel that was so important?

**TNCW:** I learned from a seasoned administrator some years ago, that every area of church life is important—nothing is to be discounted. However, I also learned that there were two areas to which the leader ought to give strong emphasis. One is evangelism and the second is stewardship. This senior statesman explained that when one gets those two things correctly in place, everything else seems to fall into place. All of the departments and activities come in line. Of course, all of it is motivated and inspired by the Holy Spirit. We can't have evangelism, freewill offerings or the returning of our tithe, if we aren't really inspired by the Holy Spirit and have a relationship with the Lord. So I just felt we needed a very strong emphasis on stewardship along with the existing emphasis on evangelism. We did encourage organizations to appoint full-time stewardship directors. If I were a conference president, I think that this would be one of the first appointments I would make. Such appointments in a conference or mission will help church members see the need to become fully committed to the mission of the church and take the time to put their talents and resources to work for the Lord.

**LRE:** Stewardship has been going on now for a number of years. Is there some aspect of stewardship that you feel should receive a particular emphasis?



**TNCW:** I do think we need to remain very practical. Members need to know how to structure their lives so that they're using their time, talents, abilities and financial resources the best way they can. It's nice to talk about philosophical aspects and the theological foundations of stewardship. However, if it does not produce practical results in our use of time, our use of talents, and, of course, in our faithfulness in returning tithe and giving of our offerings, then we really haven't delivered the message.

**LRE:** When you say "practical," are you talking about finances and time, or are you talking about some other practical aspects of stewardship?

**TNCW:** Malachi 3 is very plain. I believe God intends for us to return not only a faithful tithe but freewill offerings as well. The practical expression of how we use our time, talents, abilities, and financial resources will definitely explain to others whether or not we understand that we are stewards of all that God has entrusted to us on this earth.

**LRE:** Sometimes individuals become disillusioned with the church. What counsel would you give for those who are tempted to withhold their offerings when this happens?

**TNCW:** There's always the temptation for people to vote or speak by withholding money. Certainly tithe should never be withheld. Tithe is sacred, regardless of whether or not we agree with everything that's happening. It's a covenant and a relationship between us and God, and not between us and the person(s) with whom, or the decisions with which we seem to be having difficulty. Offerings provide an opportunity for us to choose where to place our money – with church programs and activities we feel are effective or with other selected worthwhile projects. If a challenging problem exists that is preventing someone from freely giving offerings to some worthwhile projects, the giver should work through appropriate channels to help clarify the situation. Sometimes it is a matter of misinformation. If there is something radically wrong, then the person should bring it to the attention of the organization next in line appealing that they clarify and advise on the issue. Under no circumstances should we simply withdraw our funding of church projects and activities----and certainly not withhold the Lord's tithe. It's not even our money. It's God's money. Our tithes and offerings represent a covenant with Him and it binds us to Him.

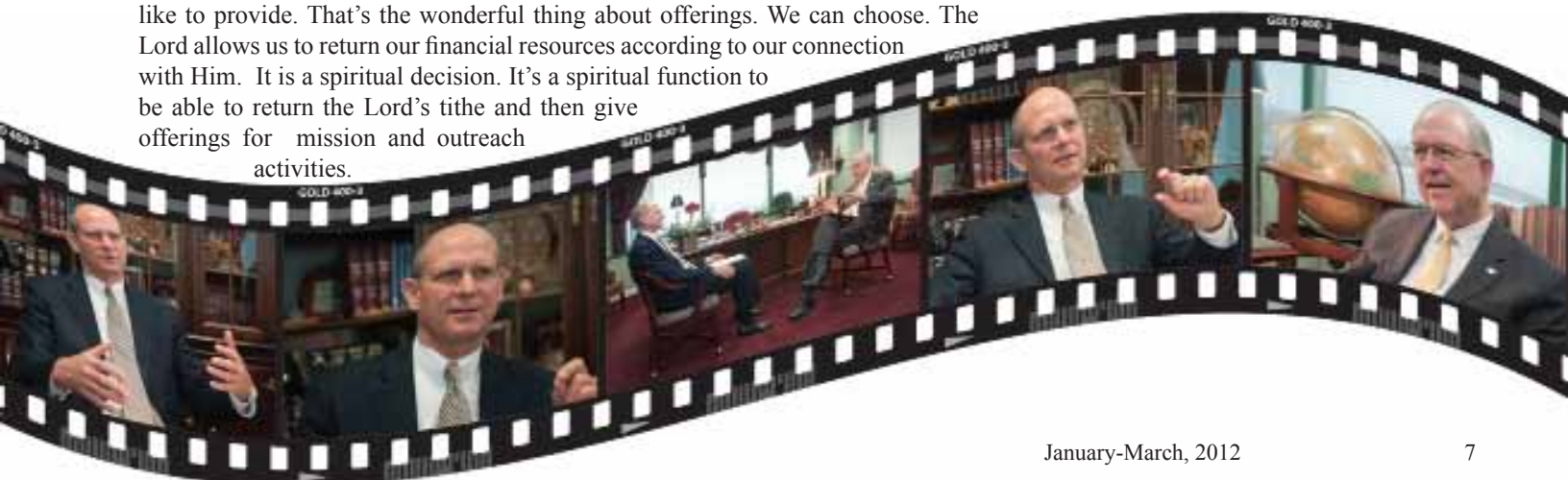
**LRE:** What are your thoughts regarding a systematic approach to giving versus project giving?

**TNCW:** I believe we need to recognize that with the changing of generations, economies and cultures comes different approaches as to the way people like to give their offerings. We need to recognize that many people become excited about projects. The church and the individual can benefit when they share specific projects and when adequate information is given about what is happening with those projects. On the other hand, the systematic approach, where I give a certain percentage or amount, is vital to the Church's ministry. I will always try to give to the local church budget, to the world mission budget and then a certain portion for conference activities as well. After that, it's pretty wide open as to what one would like to provide. That's the wonderful thing about offerings. We can choose. The Lord allows us to return our financial resources according to our connection with Him. It is a spiritual decision. It's a spiritual function to be able to return the Lord's tithe and then give offerings for mission and outreach activities.

We need to recognize that all good things come from the Lord. A certain joy comes when we return a faithful and complete tithe, give our offerings for church activities and give to other worthwhile projects. It just makes me feel much more complete in God's service and in my connection with Him when I faithfully return tithe and give my offerings.

**LRE:** Any last words you would like to add to this whole idea of being a faithful steward?

**TNCW:** The signs around us indicate that we are coming close to Christ's return. We should be even more faithful in our submission to the Lord in terms of our time, abilities and financial resources than ever before. This is not the time to become slack in our giving and in our sharing of what God has provided. It's very much a part of our connection with Jesus and allowing Him to truly take full control of every aspect of our lives, so that we become disciples of His. Stewardship shows, in practical ways, what that connection produces in everyday living. At some point in the future, our funds will be useless. What a privilege to see them used by God today in advancing His mission of lifting up Christ, His righteousness, His sanctuary service, His three angels' messages of Revelation 14, and His soon second coming. I'm just a great believer in stewardship because it is so all-encompassing and I thank you for the opportunity of speaking to those who are reading this very special magazine about the great subject of Christian stewardship.





# commitment

## A Time to Gain and a Time to Lose



**Jacques B. Doukhan**

*Jacques Doukhan is professor of Hebrew and Old Testament Exegesis at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, director of the Institute of Jewish-Christian Studies at Andrews University, and general editor of the Seventh-day Adventist International Bible Commentary project. He has been with the Andrews' faculty since 1984.*

*Born in Algeria, Doukhan attended the University of Lyon, the Adventist Seminary in Collonges, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the University of Strasbourg, and the University of Montpellier.*

*Doukhan received: a master's degree in Hebrew Language and Literature and a doctorate in Hebrew Language and Literature from the University of Strasbourg; a post-doctoral research scholarship from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem; a doctor of theology degree in Biblical Studies and Systematic Theology from Andrews University; a master's degree in Egyptology from the University of Montpellier.*

*Before his present position, Doukhan taught at the seminary in Collonges, the Adventist college in Algiers, and the Adventist Seminary in Mauritius, serving as president at the latter. He also served as a pastor in the France-Belgian area.*


*Doukhan is married to Lilianne Uebersax. They have one daughter.*

The Bible tells us that the first gift of God was the gift of time: “Let there be light, and there was light . . . the first day” (Gen. 1:3, 5). The first creation was, then, the rhythm of time, when life began in the world. Significantly, the first time that the word *natan* (give) is used in the Bible it is in the context of the fourth day of creation when God “gave” the luminaries in the heavens “to rule over the day and over the night” (Gen. 1:18). It is also interesting that the first gift of God to humans was not a precious object or a beautiful house to see and enjoy. Human history begins with a gift of time: the Sabbath. It is that first lesson of creation that Solomon remembers and meditates on at the end of his journey when he says, “There is a time for everything” (Ecc. 3:1). He is not expressing here the idea of fatalism, implying that there is nothing humans can do about the events that fall upon them. Nor is he teaching opportunism, implying that there is a proper time for every human work, for we do not choose the time of birth or the time of death (Ecc. 3:2). The Hebrew syntax of the phrase suggests instead that time is the gift of God: “time is given to everything” (lit. trans.). Looking back at the “times,” the good times and the bad times, Solomon discovered that indeed **all those times, good and bad, were the gift of God.** In this observation from the wisest man of human history, a whole philosophy of management of time is suggested.

### The Gift of Good Times

That the “good” time is a gift of God obliges us, of course, to an attitude of gratefulness and humility. For we owe all this good to God and not to our merits. Yet, the best way to respond to that gift is first of all to recognize it as such. It is our responsibility to see this time as the gift of God. This lesson is given by Jesus when he urges the people to “discern this time” (Luke 12:56). We need to learn to open our eyes and be attentive to those special times which are sent by God for our happiness and fulfillment, otherwise we may miss the opportunity of the “good” time. We should learn not to see the bad in the good and not to turn the blessing of God into a curse. It is, therefore, our duty to receive it and enjoy it and not feel guilty about it. Be happy of your good times. But it also means a duty to do something with this gift. Jesus’ parable of the talents reminds us that we should not hide the gift; we should not only see it as a gift, but also share it with others. We should not keep our time to ourselves. We should share our time with our family and with other humans. Cry and laugh with them, teach them, listen to them, but also simply sit with them. We should learn to have time for others. The best gift to our children is not our money or even our genes; it is the time which God has given us to spend with them.

Managing our time means that we should learn to multiply this time, that the ‘quality time’ may become ‘quantity time.’ The physician or the nurse who spends one hour assisting a sick person will allow the patient to live for many more years. The teacher who gives a one-hour lesson will shape the student for life. The pastor who gives a one-hour Bible study will open a listener’s understanding to the grace of eternal life. All these examples, among many others, illustrate how our time could be productive. It is not enough to have “good” times. We should strive to shape them into “better” times. It is not enough to have a fresh salad and rich vegetables to produce a good meal; we need the right recipes. We should not content ourselves with the time that is given to us. We should learn to exploit the gift and stretch it into a bigger one. The duty to see the good in the time that is given to us means that we should detect and sort out the productive, that which



has a future, from the non-productive, that which has no promise. We are often so lost in the mass of our daily activities that we miss the perception of the broader horizon and dismiss what is important and has the potential of fruitfulness. We are so busy with the need of our small duties and the eagerness to enjoy our present rewards that we ignore greater needs and more profound joys. As a result, we keep trampling on one spot and never move beyond ourselves. Ultimately, our busy life will invade our times and nothing essential will be left, not even this little “good” time given by God.

## The Gift of Bad Times

As much as it is easy to conceive that God gives us good times, it is more difficult to assume that He is also the One who gives us bad times. Yet, the poet of the book of Ecclesiastes plays on this tension and likes to repeat that God is also present on the negative side of life. When Solomon says that “there is a time to gain and a time to lose,” in Ecclesiastes 3:6, he means that God gives the good as well as the bad. The same idea is defended by Job against his wife: “Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?” (Job 2:10). Although he knows that, “an enemy has done this” (Matt. 13:28), the believer of the Bible knows also that God controls everything and that He should be blessed not only when we gain but also when we lose. For even when we lose, God is believed to be present. Even our bad times are to be received as gifts from God. This view contains an appeal to faith and hence to serve God even in the time of adversity and in spite of it (Dan. 3:18). But there is more. When the Bible says that God gives also the bad times, it is also to invite us to detect the good in them. We are not just encouraged to believe “by faith” that there is something good in this ‘bad,’ in spite of what we can see (Heb. 11:1-3). This perspective also contains a lesson of hope. We trust that God will use His power and His creativity to turn even this bad time into something good (Gen. 50:20). Implicitly this faith and hope also suggest an active response on our part. We are called to imitate God and work on these bad times and seek there positive elements. This does not mean that we shall close the eyes to that sad and negative reality. On the contrary this means that we will have to confront that reality. That God gives us ‘bad times’ means that He gives us the responsibility and the capacity to change them into something good. According to Ecclesiastes, this is the task that God has given to occupy the time given to the sons of men (Ecc. 3:10).

## Managing the Gift of Time

Certainly, the challenge is great. How can we manage God’s gift of time? How can we exploit His good gift and how can we change His bad gift? While the text of Ecclesiastes raises the problem, it also provides us with a direction. At the end of the poem on the gift of time, the biblical author speaks of another gift of God that is precisely related to the gift of time. **“Also He has put (*natan* “given”) eternity in their hearts” (Ecc. 3:11).** It is that sense of eternity, the nostalgia of the lost Eden, that will give us the imagination and the strength not only to stretch our little good gift into a better one, but also to change our bad time into a good gift, thus making us, in this time, witnesses to eternity.

## A Quick Question: What is Time?



**Geoffrey Marshall**

*Geoffrey Marshall is 32 years old and proudly Jamaican. He is involved in Adventist Youth and Personal Ministries work at the Trench Town SDA Church. He works as a hydro-geologist. He enjoys reading and traveling, and is also involved in Toastmasters International.*

**T**hat question was probably a bit harder to answer than you thought, right? Time is one of those things that is instantly and intuitively understood, yet almost impossible to define. One succinct description of time is “the thing that clocks measure,” which is as good a description as any, but it still doesn’t quite explain WHAT it is. Scientists and philosophers continue to search for an inclusive definition of time, but it continues to elude them. One of the things we can, however, firmly conclude about time is that we have a finite amount of it available to us, and everything we do in our lives is bound within that finite amount of time. Alan Laiken said “Time equals Life. Therefore, waste your time and waste your life, or master your time and master your life.” This quote is even more meaningful from a Christian standpoint, since we are called to be stewards of all the finite resources that God has given to us...including time.

### A STEWARD OF TIME?

Usually when we hear the word “stewardship,” we immediately think about the stewardship of money and other tangible things. Yet oftentimes, we overlook the importance of proper time management, which is an integral part of stewardship. After all, it takes time to get an education and begin a career, or to build a successful business from scratch. It takes time to earn money, accrue resources and assets, and generate reward. It also takes time to do the Lord’s work, evangelize, serve the church, and fulfill the gospel commission. Yet, quite often when the call goes out for us to work as servants for God in any capacity, one of the most common excuses is “I don’t have enough time to serve!” Is this a valid excuse? Don’t we all have the same gift of 24 hours to work with each day? How can we truly manage to balance our time? How can we achieve both God’s objectives for His church, and our own objectives for further stewardship?

### BALANCING MY PRIORITIES

One of the most illuminating Biblical discourses on time is found in Ecclesiasties 3, which begins, “To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under the sun,” and goes on to list many of those purposes. The key to proper time management is to recognize when these times and purposes present themselves in our lives and to act accordingly, without fear and with confidence. When we are fully surrendered to God and are able to discern His will in these times or opportunities, then we are well on the way towards proper time-stewardship. We will gain a proper balance in time spent for God’s service, and time spent for personal development and fulfilment. There are four things to keep in mind as we become better stewards of time:

#### Random thought...



**...even music keeps time!**

We make time for that which is important to us. A rational person will always choose to make time for the thing which she sees to be more important and relevant to her interests. That leads to the question, “Where do our interests lie, and should they lie where they do?” Do we cry, “I don’t have enough time,” because our outside interests are crowding out the time for service to God? It may be sports, it may be social events, it may be our work or our careers, it may be TV programs or videogames, but whatever that thing may be, are we making it more important than God? The question may also be asked of Church work: “Are we making church work more important than God’s work?” I know that Sabbath is often the busiest day of the week for me, so I have to ask myself the question, “Is church work more important than spending time with God Himself?” Where our hearts lie, there our



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# young adult

priorities will also lie.

We need to learn where our limits lie, and balance what we can do with the tasks we take on. Many persons have a strong aversion to the word “no.” They agree willingly (or unwillingly) to anything they are asked to do, either because they sincerely believe their name is Superman or Superwoman, or because they don’t want to seem rude and are therefore “unable” to say, “No.” Eventually they take on more than they can manage, they buckle under pressure, and some, or all, of the tasks they took on will remain unfinished, or poorly done. An accomplished time-manager will not only know which tasks are important and which require time, she will also know herself and the maximum workload that she can manage. Moses was one Bible leader who needed help with this matter. His father-in-law, Jethro, came to visit him (Ex. 18). Jethro saw Moses sitting from morning till night as judge for the entire nation of Israel. He pointed out that Moses was on a fast track to burn-out. Jethro suggested that he delegate authority, and give himself more time to focus on the more important matters. Many of us need to follow Jethro’s advice in our management of time, and learn when to say, “No,” when to ask for help, and delegate some of our duties.

## WHERE YOUR HEART IS...

We need to prioritize the tasks we choose to take on. Let’s imagine that it’s 8 am on Sunday morning. I have laundry to wash, and I also have to study for an exam scheduled for Monday. Both tasks are important, both tasks need to be done today, and I have enough time to do both tasks properly. However, I choose to spend 8 hours washing my laundry, and 30 minutes studying for my exam. Would that be a wise decision? Many times, people will devalue the time available for their chosen duties, and spend too much time on things that don’t matter. Fifteen minutes of Bible reading versus 3 hours of “World of Warcraft.” Thirty minutes of worship versus 2 hours of watching “As The World Turns.” A 10-second phone-call home versus a whole afternoon of political debating with friends. Six hours of sleep on a Sabbath morning, instead of attending church. M. Scott Peck said, “Until you value yourself, you won’t value your time. Until you value your time, you will not do anything with it.” When we realize how valuable we are to God, then we will be able to place the same value on the time He has given us, which will drive us to properly use it for Him.

## GIVING THE GIFT

God transcends time, so His requests of us are for OUR benefit: Time spent in service to God is not done for Him, since He doesn’t exist in our time-space continuum. Time spent in service to God is its own reward to us. It fulfills us and gives even more meaning to a life which follows the time-stream towards the inescapable points of death, the return of Jesus Christ and eternal life. When we think about the fact that only what we do for Christ will last, that should really nudge our time management up into the re-prioritizing zone. We cannot afford to spend our time on things that take away from God’s leading in our lives.

To answer our question, “What is time?” might be difficult, but at least we know that time is God’s gift to us. As we live in this moment right now, let us pledge, by God’s grace, to be true stewards of the time He has given us.

The Gaither Vocal Band sings:

"We have this  
moment to hold in  
our hands  
And to touch as it  
slips through our  
fingers like sand  
Yesterday's gone  
and tomorrow may  
never come  
But we have this  
moment today!"

## The Stewardship of Time



**Pardon Mwansa**  
*Vice President, General Conference  
of Seventh-day Adventists*

*In almost 35 years of service, Pardon Mwansa has, prior to his current position, served as Literature Evangelist; District Pastor; Departmental Director at Conference, Union and GC levels; President of Zambia Union, Eastern African Division, and Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division; and speaker/producer of the "Wait a Minute Pastor" program on Hope TV. He is the Chancellor of the Adventist University of Africa.*

*He holds a bachelor's degree in theology, a master of divinity degree, and doctoral degree in missiology from Andrews University and has a real passion for God's Church. Pardon Mwansa was born in Zambia. He is married to Judith and they have four children.*

When I first learned about Alexander the Great (July 356 BC- June 323 BC), and that he only lived to the age of 32, I was amazed that one person could have had that many great exploits attributed to him in a mere 32 years. Again, when I learned about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (January 1929-April 1968), and all that he accomplished, in only 39 years, I wondered how a person could pack so much into such a short life. There are many people who have lived up

to, and further than, 70 years of age on this earth, and some of us who are currently alive may yet live up to that age or grow even older, but when we consider what has been accomplished during these life-times, we may well be left with questions worth pondering.

It would not be fair for me to imply that all people should live lives as spectacular as Alexander the Great or Martin Luther King Jr., but what I would like us to explore is the good stewardship of our time. How should believers view time, biblically speaking? How can believers glorify God in the way they manage the gift of time? What are some of the practical ways in which one can manage time effectively and productively?

### THE GIFT OF TIME

According to Psalms 90:10, God has allocated mankind about seventy years to live. If there is still strength, God has been known to give us eighty or sometimes more years to live. After that, we die. Life itself, the ability to live each moment, is derived from God and is a gift from God. Paul proclaims that, "God gives all men life and breath," and that, "In Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:25, 28).

Given these facts, it would be correct to say that the entire seventy years or longer is a gift from God. Those seventy years on this earth are loaned to us, and when it is our time to die, time is taken away from us. From this point of view, those seventy years are ours only in the sense that they are a gift from God. This being the case, we are then accountable to God for how we use this gift of time. One Christian author puts it forthrightly when she says, "Our time belongs to God. Every moment is His, and we are under the most solemn obligation to improve it to His glory" (Christ's Object Lessons, p. 342). For Christians it is important that they do not pass the gift of life (time) without care as to what they have done with it.

### MANAGE TIME AND GLORIFY GOD!

How we spend time can either bring glory to God or dishonor Him. "So whatever you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31). It is incumbent therefore that Christians ensure that their lives are lived, and all their activities are carried out to the glory of God.

A quick answer to this challenge is to simply, as the Bible puts it, "Do all to the glory of God." In other words, our actions should be acceptable and honorable in the eyes of God. The following are some of the areas in which we can honor God with our use of time:

**Sabbath observance:** Within the gift of life or time, God has indicated to man how he is to manage portions of that time. With reference to the Sabbath, God says, "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates" (Ex. 20:8-10). What we see here is that while God has given to man the gift of time, God does give man instructions on how to manage portions of the time which He has given to him.

**Witnessing:** Another way in which a believer can use time to the glory of God, is by engaging in witnessing for Jesus. The commission that Christ gave to His followers has direct implications for the stewardship of time. Jesus' followers are



## Key Texts

bidden to go and make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:19). This is one command that requires the use of time in order to fulfill it.

**Service to others:** Yet another way of giving glory to God in our use of time is by rendering service that brings relief to others. One of the characteristics of those who will occupy the Kingdom of God is that they will have been people who used their time profitably for the good of others. “For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me” (Matt. 25:33-36). In fact, you will notice that the verse first refers to how these ‘candidates for heaven’ used their material possessions, and then it refers to how they used their time.

**Spiritual Growth:** I would remiss if I left out the fact that believers should use the gift of time to engage in spiritual disciplines that aid spiritual growth. Such disciplines include Bible study, prayer, fasting, and Christian service. It is during the time of engaging in Bible study and prayer that spiritual growth takes place.

### PRACTICAL TIME-STEWARDSHIP

I will propose the following plan for consideration:

1. Decide to obey God by keeping those portions of time that God has specifically indicated should be kept. This would include the keeping of the Sabbath which starts at sundown on Friday or the sixth day and ends at sundown on Saturday, the seventh day.
2. List those activities that you know you need to attend to, such as the study of the Word of God, engaging in prayers, witnessing for Jesus, doing service to others, such as hospital or prison visitations and other outreach activities.
3. Determine how long you plan to engage in each of these activities per week or per day.
4. Having determined how long you will spend on each activity, you then need to allocate portions of time each day to those activities. For example if you indicated that you will spend an hour in the study of the Word of God, you could allocate the hour, for example between 5:30 and 6:30 in the morning as the hour during which you will be doing that. This will call for carefully scheduling and planning.
5. Lastly, resolve to do what you have planned to do. It does not help to have plans that end on paper or remain good intentions. You need to act on them!

There are many people who fail to carry out their plans because they do not bend their efforts to accomplish what they have purposed to accomplish. To such, the counsel of Ellen White is very appropriate. “In their work let them have a definite aim. Decide how long a time is required for a given task, and then bend every effort toward accomplishing the work in the given time. The exercise of the will power will make the hands move deftly” (Christ's Object Lessons, p. 344).

My prayer is that as we grow in appreciation for the gift of time, we will, as believers, spend our time wisely and according to biblical principals, so that we may bring glory to God who will soon grant us time everlasting!

#### **Psalms 90:10**

Our days may come to seventy years, or eighty, if our strength endures; yet the best of them are but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away.

#### **Exodus 20:8-11**

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

#### **Matthew 25:31-36**

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

*Texts taken from the NIV*



## The Value of Leveraging Our Time



**Rafaat A. Kamal**  
*TED Field  
Secretatry.  
Director,  
Stewardship  
Ministries;  
Adventist Mission;  
Public Affairs &  
Religious Liberty.*

*Rafaat Kamal holds two undergraduate degrees, one in business and the other in religion. In addition to these, he holds an MBA, and three other masters degrees, in: Curriculum and Educational Administration, Humanities, and Religion. Prior to his current appointment, he has worked as a teacher and school administrator for four years, and for fifteen years in international development, the pastoral ministry and church leadership.*

Time is a unique, ir retrievable resource allocated in the same way by God to each one of us. We are forced to spend it, whether we like it or not, and at a fixed rate of 60 seconds every minute! It cannot be turned on and off like a machine. It cannot be accelerated or slowed down, like some sort of machine. Peter F. Drucker rightly noted that, “Time is the scarcest resource and unless it is managed nothing else can

be managed.”<sup>1</sup> Benjamin Franklin underscored the importance of time with his statement, “Dost thou love life? Then do not squander time, for that’s the stuff life is made of.”<sup>2</sup>

The Bible teaches us that time is a resource and we are all responsible before God for its stewardship. It also instructs us to make the most of every opportunity (Eph. 5:15-17; Ecc. 2:17-23; Ecc. 3:1-8; Col. 4:5; Ex. 20:8-11). However, we have the responsibility to manage this essential God-given gift in a way that enhances the value of the time that we have.

### WHAT WE DO WITH TIME

The pressure which time places on us drives us to ‘go, go, go’ and ‘do, do, do.’ If this is not managed with sufficient pauses to stop and “sharpen the blade”, we will lose our focus. We could end up like the bus driver who told his passengers, “I have some good news and some bad news. The bad news is that we took a wrong turn and are on the wrong road. But don’t worry, we are making great progress.” It is as though the ‘going’ itself, the movement at a fast pace, is the end itself, regardless of where it takes us.

Robert Banks, in his book, *The Tyranny of Time: When 24 Hours Is Not Enough*, states that, “Christians and people raised in a Christian setting, tend to take their work more seriously than others. The upshot of this commitment to work, and often to community and family as well, is that, ‘We are like trains—always on the move, always in a rush, and always late.’”<sup>3</sup>

### WHO, WHY, WHERE?

There is a real danger for us to fall into the trap where time-leveraging becomes all about performance and accomplishments, about doing and running. When this happens, **we lose the capacity to simply enjoy God, people, and the life God has given us.** As is the case in all of life, we need a biblical balance. Without this balance we can destroy our capacity to be the people God has called us to be. Moreover, by practicing a balanced view of time rooted in biblical principles, we are able to leverage our time better and focus on the right, strategic elements of life—who we are, where we are and why we are really here on this earth.

Being a good steward of time is, therefore, not really a matter of guarding every minute so that we can reach optimal effectiveness and productivity. Certainly we need to use our time wisely, but even more importantly, we need to have a broader grasp of time. The great events of God in history—the past, present and future as outlined in Scripture—all need to be understood from the perspective of the grand sweep of God’s plan.

### WHEN LESS IS MORE

The ultimate objective concerning **the stewardship of time is not to get busier.** What is needed instead is a better use of the time in the areas of life that matter, and to bring glory to God. Simply put, and spoken with the ‘big picture’ in mind, we need to **stop “running in place,”** move closer to the biblical goal, and satisfy the pertinent questions: Why are we really here and what is our ultimate mission? Hereby we will enhance the value of the time we do have.

1. Peter F. Drucker, *The Essential Drucker: The Best of Sixty Years of Peter Drucker's Essential Writings on Management*, Collins Business Essentials, 2001, Page 225.

2. *Managing Time*, Harvard Business School Press, (Pocket Mentor Series) 2006, Page 4.

3. Robert Banks, *The Tyranny of Time: When 24 Hours Is Not Enough*, Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1997, Page 61.

## Annual Sacrifice Offering



**Delbert Pearman**  
Planning Director  
for Adventist  
Mission at  
the General  
Conference.

*Delbert is an ordained minister from Bermuda. He is married to Curdell. They have two daughters and a grandson. He holds a BA degree from Oakwood University, USA, and an MBA degree from Maastricht School of Management, Holland. Over the past 26 years, prior to his current position, he has served the church as: accountant for the Leprosy & Tuberculosis Project, Malawi; secretary/treasurer for the Bermuda Conference; treasurer, Sri Lanka Mission; secretary/treasurer, East Mediterranean Field comprising Jordan and Lebanon; treasurer of the Ethiopian Union Mission; treasurer, Central States Regional Conference.*

While the world was still reeling in the aftermath of World War I, the Adventist Church was fully engaged in world missions and global expansion. Over the decade from 1910 to 1920, the number of evangelistic workers outside of North America went from 2,020 to 4,336 while the number of evangelistic workers within North America only increased from 2,326 to 2,619.<sup>1</sup> It was during the same period that the number of churches outside of North America (2,684) also exceeded the number within (2,243) for the first time.<sup>2</sup>

The struggling economies in Europe and the United States, coupled with the rapid expansion of Adventist world missions posed a real problem

for the leadership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Mission opportunities were available as never before, yet the crippling financial shortfalls in North America not only meant that such opportunities might never be realized, but that they actually needed to recall missionaries already in the field.

During the Autumn Council of the General Conference Committee, held September 20 to 27, 1922 in Kansas City, Missouri, USA, the delegates prayerfully decided to ask church members to give a sacrificial one week's wage to cover the quarter of a million dollar budget deficit that year. In spite of the difficult conditions of the early 1920s, members responded by giving more than \$350,000 over the following year to what became known as the Annual Week of Sacrifice Offering. Over the years, this offering has continued, with 100% of the offering going to frontline Global Mission work for planting churches in unreached and under-reached parts of the world and among new people groups.

Today, you will find the Annual Sacrifice Offering at work supporting pioneering projects in Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Armenia, Australia, Bahamas, Bangladesh, Belorussia, Bhutan, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, China, Columbia, Costa Rica, Cote-D'Ivoire, Denmark, DR Congo, East Timor, El Salvador, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Georgia, Greece, Guatemala, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran, Israel, Jamaica, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Korea, Laos, Latvia, Lesotho, Libya, Lithuania, Macedonia, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Mexico, Moldova, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Netherlands, Pakistan, Philippines, Poland, Puerto Rico, Russia, Rwanda, Sao Tome Principe, Serbia, Singapore, South Africa, South Ossetia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Swaziland, Sweden, Tanzania, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Vietnam, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

The sacrifice that our world church membership of 208,771 Seventh-day Adventists made back in 1922 is remarkable when their contribution is translated into today's dollars. Applying the cumulative inflation rate (1,196.92%) as determined by the United States Government Bureau of Labor Statistics between the dates, December 1922-December 2010, that contribution of \$350,000 back then is equivalent to \$4,189,220 today in purchasing power—**twenty dollars per member in 1922 (adjusted for inflation), compared to three dollars per member given in the year 2010!**

Today, the global economy is facing a similar challenge to that of the year 1922, yet due to the explosive growth in the world's population and the nearness of Christ's return, the challenge is even greater and our faithfulness more urgent. **We will strengthen the church's pioneer mission outreach ability seven-fold if we would just match the self-sacrificing spirit of our members in 1922.**

Year	US\$
2001.....	\$ 2,978,518
2002.....	\$ 2,032,293
2003.....	\$ 2,483,212
2004.....	\$ 2,631,227
2005.....	\$ 2,813,423
2006.....	\$ 2,902,869
2007.....	\$ 2,123,163
2008.....	\$ 3,705,281
2009.....	\$ 3,262,353
2010.....	\$ 3,829,161



1. Knight, George R., *A Brief History of Seventh-day Adventists* 2nd Edition, p. 132  
2. [www.adventiststatistics.org](http://www.adventiststatistics.org), *Annual Statistical Report for the year 1922*.

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