

WHITE WING

JUNE 2024

MESSENGER

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY



STEWARDSHIP



Stewardship
Failure

Stewardship of
The Gospel

Responsibility Greater
Than Ourselves



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WHITE WING MESSENGER

WE BELIEVE in the Holy Trinity—one God, eternally existing in Three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We believe in one God, the Father, creator of heaven and earth, of all things seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father. All things were made through Him and for Him. He is true God and true man. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and was born of the virgin, Mary. He suffered, died, was buried, and on the third day He rose from the dead. He ascended to the right hand of the Father, and He will return to judge the living and the dead. His kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who eternally proceeds from the Father. He is Teacher, Comforter, Helper, and Giver of spiritual gifts. Through Him the saving and sanctifying works of Jesus Christ are applied to the life of believers. He is the empowering presence of God in the life of the Christian and the church. The Father has sent His Son to baptize with the Holy Spirit. Speaking in tongues and bearing the fruit of the Spirit are New Testament signs of being filled with the Holy Spirit.

We believe that salvation is by grace through faith in the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the cross and that He died in our place. The believer's sins are forgiven by the shedding of His blood. We believe that healing of mind, body, soul, and spirit is available to the believer through the blood of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. We believe in one baptism in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

We believe that the grace of God brings forgiveness and reconciliation to those who repent, as well as transformation in holiness, enabling them to live a Christ-like life. Sanctification is both a definite work of grace and a lifelong process of change in the believer brought by the blood of Jesus, the Word of God, and the enabling power of the Holy Spirit.

We believe in one holy, universal church, composed of all true believers in Jesus Christ, offering fellowship and calling for service to men and women of all races, nations, cultures, and languages. We believe in the spiritual and ultimate visible unity of the church.

We believe that the Bible—both Old and New Testaments—is the inspired Word of God. The Bible is God's revelation of Himself and His will to humankind, sufficient for instruction in salvation and daily Christian living. The Bible is the Christian's rule of faith and practice.

We believe that God will ultimately reconcile all things in heaven and earth in Christ. Therefore, we look forward to new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

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About the Church of God of Prophecy

The Church of God of Prophecy is a vibrant, worldwide body of believers, united in worship, working hand-in-hand to share God's love and a message of hope to the brokenhearted. The organization has more than a million members and more than 10,000 ministers, worshipping in more than 10,000 churches or missions in 135 nations of the world.

Church of God of Prophecy Core Values

- Prayer
- The Harvest
- Leadership Development
- Biblical Stewardship
- Service

Vision Statement

Reconciling the world to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit

Mission Statement

The Church of God of Prophecy is a Christ-exalting, holiness, Spirit-filled, all-nations, disciple-making, church-planting movement with passion for Christian union.

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Spanish-Speaking Caribbean
Clayton Martin: Caribbean/Atlantic
Ocean Islands
James Kolawole: Africa
Tim McCaleb: Asia/Australia/Oceania
Gabriel E. Vidal: South America

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FEATURES

- 8 Stewardship Failure**
Bishop Tim McCaleb, DMin
- 11 Stewardship of the Gospel**
Bishop Adrian Varlack, Sr.
- 14 Responsibility Greater Than Ourselves**
Janice Miller
- 16 Generosity: The Foundation of Biblical Stewardship**
Obed Natán Chic
- 20 The Grace of Giving**
Bishop Scott Gillum
- 23 Why Did the Apostle Paul Not Speak of Tithing in His Epistles?**
Bishop Ricardo Hinsbis Espinoza

DEPARTMENTS

- 27 Accredited Ministry Development**
- 30 Heritage Ministries**
New Churches

COLUMNS

- 4 Facing Forward**
Bishop Gabriel E. Vidal
- 5 Connections**
News from Paraguay
- 6 Connections**
News from Uruguay
- 7 Messages**
Marsha Robinson, Editor

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CONNECTIONS

NEWS FROM PARAGUAY | FEBRUARY 2024



Joint Services: Paraguay COGOP

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus. On February 10 and 11, we had the privilege of having services with Pastors Joe Orona and Raul Carrasco in attendance. We thank God for the lives of these pastors, for the great blessing of having them, for God using them to convey his message to us, and for motivating us to continue preparing ourselves to fulfill the vision of “reconciling Paraguay with Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.” We extend special greetings to the local churches they pastor. We are one in Jesus.

Nora Riquelme
Communications National Leader



CONNECTIONS

NEWS FROM URUGUAY | YOUTH CAMP REPORT



Metamorphosis: Change Is Necessary

On January 19–21, 2024, the youth of the Church of God of Prophecy in Uruguay gathered in “El Monte” to celebrate a new camp.

The youth camp, with the theme “Metamorphosis: Change Is Necessary,” was a transformational event for the young people who attended and had the opportunity to experience a significant personal and spiritual change. More than one hundred campers enjoyed three days where God manifested himself in different ways. This year, we had the outstanding visit of Pastor Carlos Perez from the United States, who ministered with profound teachings on personal change. Through his messages, Pastor Perez inspired the youth to reflect on the importance of inner transformation and the positive impact it can have on their lives.

The messages ranged in topic from the search for Jesus, identifying those areas we need to change, examining our own lives, and leaving everything that separates us from God and his purpose in us, to the search for the Holy Spirit, who moved among us from the very first moment.

The campers were challenged and inspired to improve their relationship with God and to be able to transmit the gospel message to this

generation. National Youth Leader Diego Mota and his wife, Ximena Falco, were responsible for the fun at the camp and organizing games that tested the physical ability of each camper.

The campers also participated in soccer championships, theater plays, and a very funny water war. The musical part was provided by Las Piedras COGOP worship group, who presented songs that brought us into the presence of God.

Saturday night had its special moment with the party of colors—a time in which fellowship, fun, and

friendship among campers were the highlight of the night. We participated in different games, ate pizza, drank fruit smoothies, and enjoyed a grand finale with Jonatan Cantero.

The food also had its highlight, as we were able to enjoy a variety of dishes, thanks to Pastor Leandro Cardozo and his team.

Ultimately, it was three days where God was in every detail, and we felt his presence in every moment. From the team that organized this camp, we are grateful to all those who, in one way or another, supported the vision. Without them, this would not have been possible.

– Uruguay COGOP Camp Team





Marsha Robinson
Editor

MESSAGES

A SERIES

“For this reason, I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles—assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God’s grace that was given to me for you, how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly.”
Ephesians 3:1–3 ESV

There in that passage is the theme of the June *White Wing Messenger*: Stewardship. Over the generations, stewardship has more often than not focused on financial resources. We have erroneously believed stewardship is only concerned with giving; we give our money so our church can compensate staff, pay bills, do a little outreach, and take care of monetary needs.

When Paul talks about stewardship with the people of Ephesus, he is not talking about money. Real stewardship, he says, is taking care of what God has given. He mentions grace, but what has the grace of God given? The gospel, the Holy Spirit, creation, salvation, baptism, and so many other things are gifts of grace from God for us to steward. Even the call to steward is a gift from God.

Managing the resources God entrusts to you is an awesome privilege. Evidence from how you use your “stuff” demonstrates what your faith is like. Faithful stewards use their stuff to help their family, friends, congregations, and communities understand the gospel. Stewardship is not about you and your comfort, or even their comfort. It is always about reconciling the world to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. That is the gospel.

No one is always faithful in stewardship for the sake of the gospel. We must ask the Lord to work in and through our stewardship so that the people around us—individuals and congregations—better understand the gospel. As the Lord entrusted the gospel of Jesus Christ to Paul, so he entrusts it to each of us. Let us be faithful stewards.

CARETAKERS OF THE GOOD NEWS



STEWARDSHIP FAILURE: THE ORIGINAL SIN

Many Christians think that the word stewardship is a verb. In this view, stewardship is something one does to manage the resources that God has given. However, when stewardship is treated as a verb (an action that a person does), it becomes a job in which one can clock in and clock out as if going to work in a factory.

However, stewardship is not just something that a Christian does with a portion of his or her life, money, or time. Stewardship is not a verb; it is a noun. It is an appointed office of responsibility, and it is something that we are (stewards). Stewardship was the assigned role for Adam and Eve at the time of creation, for they were made stewards over the garden to keep and to care for it.

Consider Genesis 1:28 (NKJV):

Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

Biblically, work and stewardship are not part of the curse, for they are each good. God worked, created, and proclaimed his labor and creation as good from the beginning. In Genesis 2:8–9, after the initial

creation event (which included Adam and Eve), the Bible says that God planted a garden. When evaluating this scripture, it is worthy to note that Adam did not plant the first garden, but the first garden was planted by God. Metaphorically, one could say that God got dirt under his fingernails; after the creation, God placed his stewards in this garden to care for it, to develop it, to build cities, and to arrange things in order.

After the creation, God said to his stewards, “Please feel free to enjoy, to eat, and to use all these resources freely; however, I would like to keep one small portion for myself. This one tree in the center of the garden is my tree, and my request is that you leave it alone.” Therefore, God gave permission to Adam and to Eve to have access to everything else in the garden but his one tree (his part). Obviously, we know the rest of the story: Man and Woman took what God had given to them and were not satisfied, for they eventually desired God’s portion too! Does that sound familiar?

How often do we condemn Adam and Eve and wonder, “Why?” Why did they have to take fruit from that one tree that God had kept back for himself—the one tree that was holy unto him?

Yet, in a sense, those who refuse to tithe are still



Bishop Tim McCaleb, DMin | Asia, Australia, and Oceania General Presbyterian

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following Adam and Eve's lead and are participating in Adam and Eve's original sin. In other words, everything we have has been given to us by God. He has placed us in his garden, which is where we live and work. He has given to us our health, time, talents, jobs, and treasures, and in return, he only asks for our tithe and some offerings, which metaphorically is the one tree that we should not eat from or take to ourselves.

Even in today's world, some look on the tithe that God has asked them not to touch, and they see it is good for food and drink, or good to buy clothes or something else that is desired. When this is done, they look on that holy lump that is pleasing to the eye and take God's portion for themselves. Is this not exactly what Adam and Eve did? How easy it is to condemn Adam and Eve but then do the same!

As we look further into Scripture, we know that Adam and Eve's bad stewardship was the cause of the original sin of disobedience, and this disobedience brought a curse upon the earth. This curse was hardship of thorns, thistles, famines, earthquakes, hurricanes, droughts, and floods. Romans 8:18–22, and particularly verse 20, make it clear that the earth is still under this curse and hardship. Yet our mandate has not changed, as our role on earth is still that of

stewards. And the curse is still there as well. When a person touches, keeps, and eats that portion that God has asked to keep for himself, it causes thorns, thistles, and famines to be produced. Malachi makes that clear when he writes the following:

"Will a man rob God (keep my portion of the garden)? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings. (You took and ate from that which I had designated for myself.) You are cursed with a curse, For you have robbed Me, Even this whole nation." (Malachi 3:8–9)

In other words, when we keep God's portion for ourselves, it corrupts our portion causing weeds (negative circumstances) and hardships, and the fruit that is produced is often bitter and unpalatable. On the other hand, when God is given his part, it acts like fertilizer on our remaining part, and the 90 percent produces so much more than it would have done.

Therefore, let us take up our assigned responsibilities and be good stewards over God's garden. Let us refuse the temptation to eat from the tree that he has kept for himself (the tithe). Let us reverse the curse, and let us see the goodness of God's generosity as we obey and believe what his Word has proclaimed.



CARETAKERS OF LIGHT

“Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you.”

Isaiah 60:1–2 ESV

It is noteworthy that God gave us the gift of light first. He revealed light’s primacy on that first day of creation. Yet, we are almost oblivious to light’s omnipresence and profound importance. It is as if light is too simple, too boundless to comprehend fully.

Light truly is life. Every student knows the interaction between light and plant life produces oxygen. All living things need oxygen. No oxygen, no breath. No breath, no life.

Likewise, without the Light of the World, Jesus, we would be spiritually lifeless, breathless—dead in our sins and trespasses—as Paul writes in Ephesians 2. Sin is darkness and death. Jesus is the light of life, and Jesus has revealed this light to us. Our sin is exposed. Our death is deserved. But as the light of life pierces the darkness in which we live, one very simple, unimaginable gift is given: God’s glory! It has risen upon us and bestowed on us what we do not deserve: Life!

This light does not stop with us. The Holy Spirit, through Isaiah, said the light, the Lord, would rise upon us and show his glory. Jesus said it like this: “You are the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14). So, when we share the gift of light, it also reveals God’s glory! This is all part of the wonderful task of stewardship for which we have been made and redeemed. As his light shines on us, we are created to reflect it to those around us in words, actions, and generosity!



A STEWARDSHIP OF THE GOSPEL

Thesis: A “Stewardship of the Gospel” has been passed to us by the original stewards—the apostles, eyewitnesses, early participants—those partakers in the official proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ our Lord. The continuity of this stewardship has been transmitted and preserved for each succeeding generation of Christians by the Holy Spirit through the agency of God’s written Word. This accords with the universal nature of God’s redemptive work in the death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and exaltation of the Son of Man/Son of God, Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Greater or more needful news has never entered human history, and no greater sacred or more critical responsibility ever devolved upon mankind!

Scriptural texts:

“Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel. But I have used none of these things, nor have I written these things that it should be done so to me: for it would be better for me to die than that anyone should make my boasting void. For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!” (1 Corinthians 9:14–16 NKJV).

“. . . just as the original eyewitnesses and servants of the word handed them to us” (Luke 1:2 HCSB).



“And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2 NKJV).

“... so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit . . .” (Hebrews 2:3–4 NKJV).

These Scriptures confirm what our thesis avers, that the stewardship of the gospel of Jesus Christ has been bequeathed to succeeding generations of Christians. But, as with any philosophy or idea, its passage through time and history tends to refocus, downplay, add to, deviate from, or even replace one or more of its original emphases. The concept of the gospel, “a stewardship of God perpetually entrusted to the followers of Christ until he returns,”¹ has not been immune to the effects of history. The editors of *Bakers Dictionary of Theology*, in the article by Fred L. Fisher, brought this to our attention many years ago. The article’s closing paragraph states, “The modern emphasis on the stewardship of possessions, while true, may tend to obscure the fact that the Christian’s primary stewardship is that of the gospel and includes the use of his whole life as well as his money.”²

It is my contention that our view of the gospel as a stewardship from God needs revisiting in the ecclesiastical sense—that is, in the sense of the Church’s overall presence, purpose, administration, and operational focus. This thought, of course, is applicable to all true Christian churches that are serious about the Bible as God’s Holy Word. In our particular case, I think this revisit will be helpful at all levels: locally, state or national, regionally, and worldwide. The present operational theme from our last International Assembly, “Reconciling the World to Christ through the Power of the Holy Spirit,”³ as well as the proposed emphasis for the upcoming 2024 Assembly, “On Mission: Reconciling the World to Christ,”⁴ refocuses our minds on the work of the gospel. My hope and prayer is that this healthy return to a sustained gospel predominance will catch on in every practical way throughout the Church. After all, the gospel produces the church and sustains her validity as an instrument of the kingdom of God!

Our Lord continued his work as “head of the church and Savior of the body” (Ephesians 5:23) with his special call and commissioning of the apostle Paul (the former infamous Saul of Tarsus) to the Gentiles (nations) as the complement and completion of the apostolic circle of twelve. Paul’s presence, work, and leadership among the brethren brought to bear the universal dimension of the church. In time, the gospel took its rightful form as a God-given stewardship of the historic church.⁵ Stewards, of course, are required to be faithful in that which, as they are well aware, belongs to another (1 Corinthians 4:1–2; 9:17; Titus 1:7). In a similar manner, the church in general (and her ministers and workers in particular) is entrusted, by the Lord’s own sending out of the apostles and their followers, with the sacred stewardship of the gospel which transcends time and is, therefore, the responsibility of succeeding generations. As the early church and its leadership once had to be jolted out of the narrow confines of Old Testament traditions, so perhaps today we also need to re-estimate and re-elevate the gospel itself to its true and unique place among the many things churches now do by reason of habit.⁶

The gospel is the stewardship of all stewardships! It can never be second place to any other religious activity. Paul’s “woe is me if I preach not the gospel” can perhaps also be applied to the church corporately. May we sense and adopt his passion and commitment as the Holy Spirit leads!

1 My definition.

2 Everett F. Harrison, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Carl F. H. Henry, eds., *Baker’s Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1994), 502.

3 *The Journal of the 101st International Assembly of the Church of God of Prophecy*, July 20–24, 2022 (Cleveland TN: White Wing Publishing House), pages 27–33, gives an extensive treatment of this theme.

4 COGOP Official Facebook page, International Assembly logo, 2024.

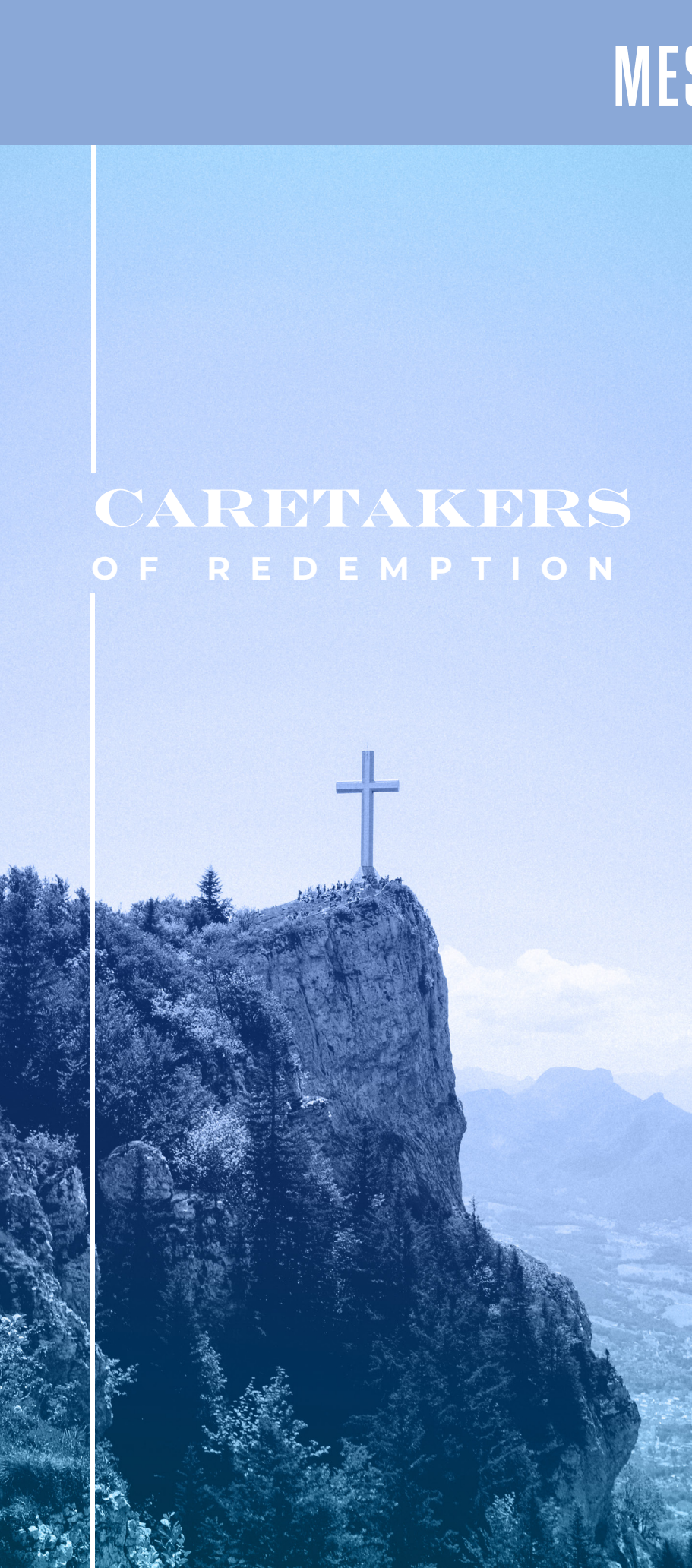
5 Through the choosing, assignment, and placement of Saul of Tarsus as apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 9:10–16; 22:21; Romans 1:5; 11:13), our Lord set in motion the worldwide dimension of the church and its full gospel responsibility to all nations as God always intended. This was later recognized by the other apostolic leaders in the New Testament. See Acts 15:2–4, 12, 22; 2 Peter 3:15–16.

6 I mean this comment to apply to all true Christian churches and para-church groups. History’s long arc of over 2,000 years has unfortunately bent us in the direction of much ecclesiastical busyness, and the sometimes-self-serving nurture/nature of church management, and the concomitant development of organizational maintenance. The gospel’s priority must be freed from this encumbering burden. No Christian organization is guiltless in this regard. Self-preservation is the antithesis of the gospel’s propulsion dynamic.



Bishop Adrian L. Varlack, Sr. | Cleveland, Tennessee

Adrian Varlack, Sr., former church historian for the Church of God of Prophecy International Offices and consultant to the general overseer, is a regular writer for the *White Wing Messenger* and has contributed lessons and articles for college-level texts, Sunday school curricula, and other training courses. Because of his vast knowledge and experience, marked by his deep love for Christ and his church, Bishop Varlack remains an in-demand speaker at conferences and conventions around the world.



CARETAKERS OF REDEMPTION

“So that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.”

Ephesians 3:10–12 ESV

Stewardship is in our DNA. Read Genesis. We were created to rule over creation and subdue it. But our obstacle with stewardship pops up in Genesis 3. There, in outright rebellion, Eve and Adam decided they were owners rather than stewards. Claiming ownership of something that belongs to someone else is theft. Those first stewards stole more than fruit. They tried to steal God’s place and God’s glory! And everyone born after them imitated them. What God has given for human beings to steward, we have attempted to own.

Yet in the fullness of time, Jesus Christ showed us God’s glory once again. He willingly gave himself on the cross, accomplishing God’s plan to redeem us. We have been forgiven and restored in Jesus and are now stewards once again! Not just of creation, but of the gospel! As we faithfully steward the gifts God has entrusted to us, we point people to redemption and restoration through Jesus Christ. Remember, the world sees Jesus through your stewardship of what God has given you. What are you showing the world in how you steward God’s gifts?

RESPONSIBILITY

GREATER THAN OURSELVES

God entrusts his stewards with the following: time, opportunities, abilities, possessions, blessings, and resources. In return, God requires that we use these assets in faithful service to him and others. This article focuses on the *multiplication* and *productivity* aspects of stewardship. These words paint a mental image of movement, action, and change; abundant production. Philippians 3:13–14 records Paul describing a lifestyle of pressing toward—moving forward: “Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (NKJV). The writer of Hebrews said, “Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us” (12:1). The chapters leading up to Hebrews 12 indicate the writer was referring to the sin of unbelief.

The weight of fear and the sin of unbelief are hinderances that result in static and unfruitful lives. Jesus used a parable in Matthew 25:14–30 to illustrate this point:

- A man was leaving his home to take a long journey.
- Before leaving he entrusted his property to three of his servants.
- He distributed assignments based on their abilities. Alyssia Trujillo states that having everyone in the right roles is critical to success. When people are working in positions that match their skills, they are more likely to be productive, communicate effectively, produce high-quality work, and feel satisfied with their work.¹
- The servants who received five talents and two talents respectively moved forward with abundant production and multiplication.

- The servant who received one talent was carrying the weight of fear and the sin of unbelief, resulting in stagnation and unfruitfulness.

After an extended period, the master returned home and met with his servants for a status check on assets left in their care. The workers who initially received five talents and two talents both had doubled their responsibility. These faithful workers received the same reward from the master because each did his/her best with what they had been given: “Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord” (25:23, also verse 21).

The meeting with the third worker, the one that had received one talent, did not go so well. He admitted to being unproductive due to fear and unbelief.

The apostle Peter gives us a roadmap to a lifestyle of fruitfulness and faithful service to God and to each other in 2 Peter 1:3–10. He records that if we partake of the divine nature and these things abound in us—faith, goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, kindness, and love—we will neither be barren nor unfruitful.

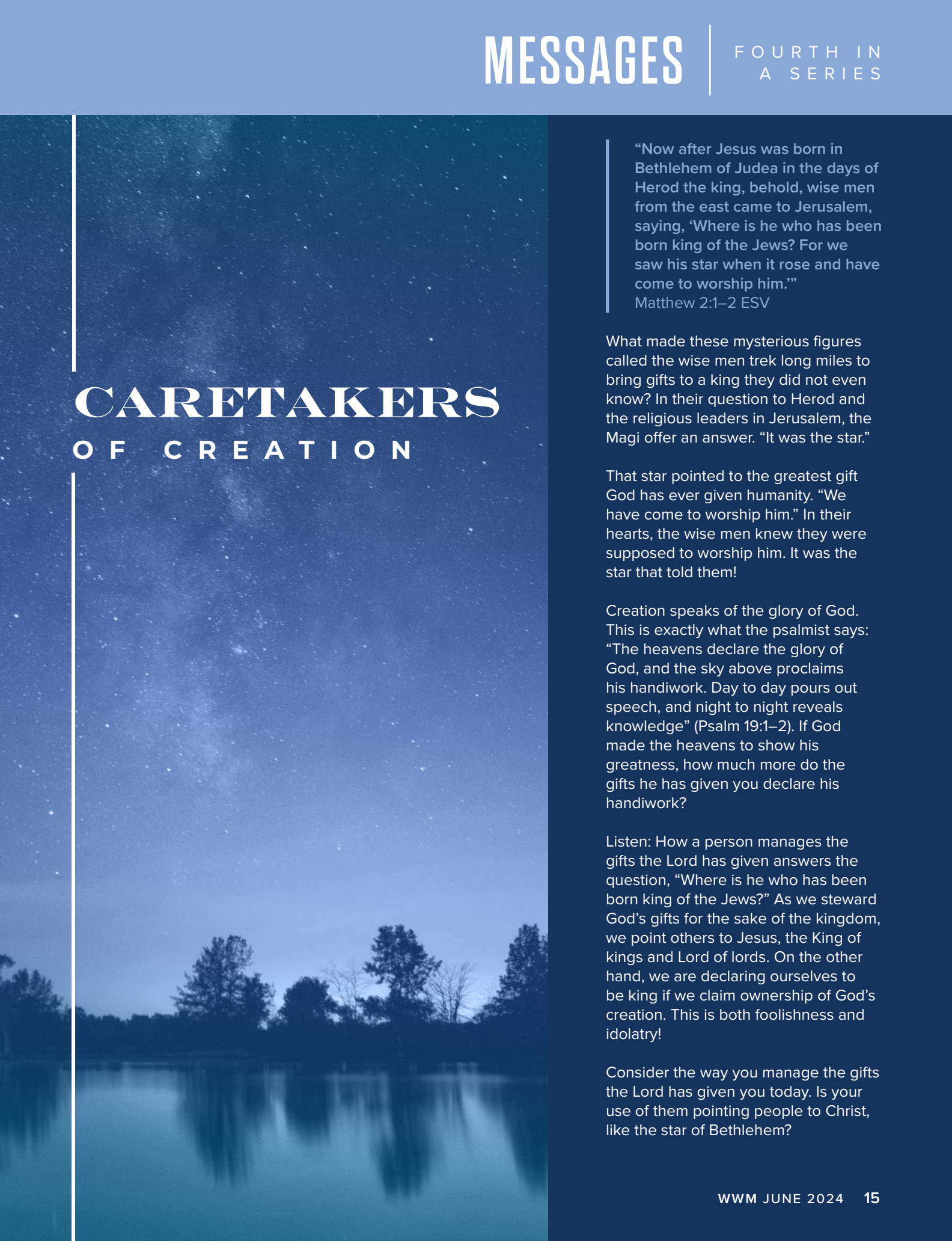
With the precious promises that our Lord has given to us, which Peter describes as “all things that pertain to life and godliness,” we are motivated to lay aside the weight of fear and the sin of unbelief. This, in turn, allows us to be abundantly fruitful workers in the hands of Jesus, “the author and finisher of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2).

¹ Alyssia Trujillo, “The Importance of Matching Team Members to the Right Roles,” Steele Consulting Inc., April 26, 2023, <https://www.steeleconsult.com/the-importance-of-matching-team-members-to-the-right-roles/>.



Janice Miller | Gallatin, Tennessee

Janice Miller, MBA, loves studying and teaching the Word of God. She has published two books, *While Men Sleep* (2016) and *Critical Thinkers* (2018), and has recently begun screenwriting. Married since 1975, she and her husband, Roy, live in Gallatin, Tennessee, where both are active in ministry at the Gallatin COGOP.



CARETAKERS OF CREATION

“Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, ‘Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.’”

Matthew 2:1–2 ESV

What made these mysterious figures called the wise men trek long miles to bring gifts to a king they did not even know? In their question to Herod and the religious leaders in Jerusalem, the Magi offer an answer. “It was the star.”

That star pointed to the greatest gift God has ever given humanity. “We have come to worship him.” In their hearts, the wise men knew they were supposed to worship him. It was the star that told them!

Creation speaks of the glory of God. This is exactly what the psalmist says: “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge” (Psalm 19:1–2). If God made the heavens to show his greatness, how much more do the gifts he has given you declare his handiwork?

Listen: How a person manages the gifts the Lord has given answers the question, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews?” As we steward God’s gifts for the sake of the kingdom, we point others to Jesus, the King of kings and Lord of lords. On the other hand, we are declaring ourselves to be king if we claim ownership of God’s creation. This is both foolishness and idolatry!

Consider the way you manage the gifts the Lord has given you today. Is your use of them pointing people to Christ, like the star of Bethlehem?



GENEROSITY

THE FOUNDATION OF BIBLICAL STEWARDSHIP

“The generous soul will be made rich, And he who waters will also be watered himself.”
(Proverbs 11:25 NKJV)

Generosity is the quality and capacity that distinguishes a person for giving selflessly, that is, expecting nothing in return. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, describes the structure (the components) of generosity: “So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7).

Let each one give as he has purposed in his heart.

This expression emphasizes a purpose that comes from the heart (not by obligation, nor by requirement; rather by will). This purpose must be with the goal of helping, relieving, or cooperating with one’s neighbor in whatever situation there may be (economic, moral, spiritual). “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2).

The book of Acts records that the early Christians “. . . sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as everyone had need” (2:45). What was the reason the early Christians were so generous? They did it from the heart.

Not with sadness. Sadness is a regret and, therefore, people who give with sadness feel uneasiness or displeasure. The feeling of sadness is often linked to stinginess and greed. These evils incite one to give with misery and reproach.

Nor out of necessity. Some tend to “figure out” if the person who will receive the benefit (donation/help) really needs it, and then when they determine that “apparently” he/she does not need it, they then do not help him/her. On the other hand, others give to be blessed; however, they ignore that the true meaning of giving is because we have already been blessed. In giving, we should not put our own needs or the needs of others first. Because we have been blessed, whenever we have the opportunity to help or donate something, let us do it even if it is not considered necessary.

God loves the cheerful giver. Note that the Scripture says that God loves, not that God blesses, the cheerful giver. Before we GIVE, he has already blessed us. We cannot give without first having God’s blessing. King David declared, “But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly as this? For all things come from You, And of Your own we have given You” (1 Chronicles 29:14). Those who “give” to be “blessed” are totally mistaken; God’s financial plan does not work that way. “I have shown you in every way, by labouring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive’” (Acts 20:35).

Joy stirs up generosity. The verse preceding 2 Corinthians 9:7 [verse 6] reads, “. . . He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.”

Generosity in biblical stewardship is not limited only to the financial aspect of life, but it encompasses all areas in which God provides for our care. He has given us everything—absolutely everything. In fact, everything belongs to him, even our lives, our family, and the “possessions we have.” We often tend to act as if we think that everything we have is ours, and we obtained it by our efforts. But that is not the case. When we give, we are not giving of what is “ours,” but of what is HIS. Let us never forget that we are only God’s stewards: “As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (1 Peter 4:10).

On what does the manifold grace of God rest? In God’s unfailing generosity.

- He is JIREH, our Provider.
- He is LEHEM, our Food/Bread.
- He is RAPHA, our Healer.
- He is RAAH, our Shepherd.
- He is EL ROI, the one who watches us—the one who does not miss a single moment.
- He is TSIDKENU, our righteousness.
- He is MEKADDESH, the one who sanctifies us.
- He is ELYON, the highest and above all things.
- He is TSUR, our Protector, our Rock.
- He is SHALOM, our Peace.
- He is NISSI, our Banner/Victory.
- He is SHAMA, our Companion.

So, if God’s manifold grace shows us that he has already given to us before we give, will it be a burden to share what we have received? Will we continue to

be hard-hearted thinking that the goods are ours? Will we continue to be arrogant thinking that our neighbor does not need them? If we are generous, then we are good stewards of God and, indeed, good Christians.

The two main actions that mark generosity as the foundation of biblical stewardship is tithing and giving.

Tithing and giving is one of the teachings that, for many years, we have listed as prominent in the Church of God of Prophecy. Moreover, it was also included in the series of our advice to members. Now, with a clearer vision, we list it as a biblical principle and an important Christian practice. Note that the teaching of tithing and giving is not two in one, but one. Giving offerings and tithing have never been two separate things in God’s financial plan. However, we must keep in mind that, for the time of grace, neither one nor the other is an obligation of man towards man, but a commitment of man towards God by the simple fact of its being a biblical teaching.

Nowadays, the number of people who reject this teaching has increased due to the disorderly practices that have been attributed to it by supporters of the false gospel of “prosperity.” They have twisted the teaching of tithing and giving; they teach that one must tithe and give to be blessed, but neither the Bible nor the Church of God of Prophecy agree with this. As previously stated, we do not give to be blessed; we give because we have already been blessed. Therefore, we tithe and give because, by doing so, we also practice the generosity that the Lord taught us in the Holy Scriptures.



GENEROSITY in biblical stewardship is not limited only to the financial aspect of life, but it encompasses all areas in which God provides for our care.



Some refuse to tithe because they consider tithing as a practice that dates back to the Mosaic law, but they actually forget that Abraham was the first to tithe (before the Law was given). Abraham is highly praised in Scripture for the faith he demonstrated in trusting God to provide the ram to be sacrificed, and he is also praised for that same faith he had when he tithed without God asking or commanding him to do so (Genesis 14:20; Hebrews 7:1–9). Others argue that Jesus abolished (nullified) the teaching of tithing because of his apparent silence, but that is not the case. When we read Matthew 23:23, we realize that he did not ban tithing, but rather exhorted the scribes and Pharisees that they should follow justice, mercy, and faith without ceasing to tithe.

The tithe and the offering are accompanied by good deeds as an expression of the generosity that is in our heart and as the foundation of biblical stewardship. When we give offerings, we are not tithing, and when we tithe, we are not giving offerings. Why? Because tithes are a specific amount (10 percent of our income or earnings), and offerings are given in any amount.

When we tithe, we contribute to the support of the ministry. The Word of God teaches us that the worker has the right to eat and drink, just as he who feeds the flock drinks from the milk of the flock. The Scripture also says, in this regard, “. . . Is it a great thing if we reap your material things? . . . Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of

the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar? Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel” (1 Corinthians 9:11, 13–14; read 9:1–14).

When we give [offerings], we have the opportunity to contribute to the support of the ministry; help the poor, the widow, and the orphan; donate to missions; build churches; contribute to the finances of our local church, and so forth. We should always be willing to give.

Many blessings are received before and after we give generously. When we give willingly and cheerfully, we do all to the glory of God.

And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work. As it is written, “He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever.” Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness, while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God. For the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God. (2 Corinthians 9:8–12)



Obed Natán Chic | Esquinalá, Guatemala

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CARETAKERS OF HIS PRESENCE



“But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: ‘Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.’”

Isaiah 43:1 ESV

As we hear the Holy Spirit through the prophet Isaiah, the words bring us comfort. The stewards who have been created by God and are being sustained by God do not need to fear.

What is the reason? We belong to God! We are completely his. We were created by his mighty power. His incredible grace has redeemed us through the innocent suffering and death of God’s beloved Son, Jesus! God, as the owner of all created things, sees you as a treasured possession. You can always rely on him. God may not make you tremendously wealthy, intelligent, or beautiful, but you have the certainty that he is with you.

You have the blessings of life and salvation from the Lord. Sharing the gifts God gives us should not scare us. He has promised to be with us. This is why we can be extravagantly generous! God has promised to keep his word! He will never abandon us. Faithful stewardship and generosity are expressions of our trust in his promises. Sometimes it is not easy to be generous, but stewardship is a call to action. It is warfare!

In the big picture, it is not about us, anyway. Ultimately, it is about God who owns everything, including us! He is believable and trustworthy. He is our protector, and we need not be afraid. We have been given all he has, so we are free to be faithful, generous stewards. This is for God’s glory and to bless others!

A close-up photograph of a hand gently holding a small white daisy flower. The background is a soft, out-of-focus blue. The text 'THE GRACE OF GIVING' is overlaid in a dark blue serif font. The word 'GIVING' is significantly larger and has a yellow horizontal line underneath it. A faint, large 'GIVING' watermark is also visible in the background.

THE GRACE OF
GIVING

Apostle Peter writes that we “are being built up a spiritual house” (see 1 Peter 2:5 NKJV). In this “spiritual house,” systems and structure, while important, must well up from the essentials of deep intimate relationships with God and one another. Systems and structures should serve the church, not the church serving the systems and structures. In some cases, we have endeavored to develop a global financial system to produce a healthy global function of biblical stewardship. The essential relationships must precede the critical systems and structures for the spiritual health of the church at all levels of ministry to be fruitful.

No system or structure, legislative demands, hierarchical pressure, or meritorious rewards will produce the Acts 2 and Acts 4 principle of, as Luke puts it, having “all things in common” (Acts 2:44; 4:32). From the context of supporting those in need, Paul writes of what many would call “the grace of giving” or the spirit of generosity that flows from a heart that understands, “. . . God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work” (2 Corinthians 9:7–8).

As we review the book of Acts, we see how Jesus intended his church to do life together. We see foundational principles that must guide our movement into a proper stewardship alignment with God and one another. Rightly understood, Acts, as a historical record, provides us an invaluable glimpse into the life and times of the early church. The Holy Spirit at work at the center of church life in a careful study of Acts is compelling. Acts 2 and 4 detail a reflection of the infant church’s character, not just a function that met the needs of the saints. Efforts to establish a healthy stewardship function without establishing a healthy stewardship character may produce results. Still, our alignment with biblical stewardship of “having all things in common” will produce “an abundance for every good work” (2 Corinthians 9:8). The key in this passage, rightly understood as radical generosity and rightly seen, flows from the dynamic of shared common

life experienced within the “household of God” (Ephesians 2:19), “the body of Christ” (1 Corinthians 12:27), “the Church of God” (Acts 20:28), and “fellowship with one another” (1 John 1:7).

This common bond was certainly understood based on the work of Holy Spirit in the lives of first-century believers as the apostles boldly proclaimed the resurrection of Jesus. Their bold declaration fueled the one heart, being together, all things common understanding. The understanding from Acts 2 and 4 is that ownership was not for the benefit of one, but the whole. Similarly, as Paul’s words were to the church regarding spiritual gifts, it was for the benefit of all: “But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all” (1 Corinthians 12:7).

This action of the infant church established a sense of unity and togetherness so that no one was alone and without connections [fellow believers] that would assist in meeting their needs. As often the case, we see the behavior as paramount and miss the heart that drives the action. This phrase carries with it more of the idea that the believers were experiencing an overflowing unity among themselves that produced togetherness—the heart of this infant church. Giving was more of a spiritual and emotional condition rather than a mandated action.

So, the answer to any financial dilemma may be more founded in a spiritual dynamic rather than legislated behavior. The system and structures should serve the core values of the church as aligned with the scriptural revelation of the heart of God as led by the Holy Spirit, not the church serving rules of tithing and giving. Tithing and giving are matters of the heart. The grace of giving Paul mentions to the Corinthians will permeate our living in a common bond of Christ.

With that said, no one level of leadership should bear the responsibilities of the world. We are a global church with global responsibilities. The needs of others are met as we live in “the grace of giving” (see 2 Corinthians 8:1–3).



Bishop Scott Gillum | Florida State Bishop

Bishop Scott Gillum has served in full-time ministry in many capacities for 44 years. He is the current chairman of the International Assembly Finance and Stewardship Committee of the Church of God of Prophecy. His appointed ministry calling has taken him to North Carolina, Kansas, California, Kentucky, Texas, and Florida. Bishop Gillum’s passion is to care for and equip pastors to equip leaders for life. Scott and his wife, Brenda, currently reside in Clermont, Florida, where they serve as pastors to pastors (Florida State Bishop). They have two adult children and two grandchildren.

CARETAKERS OF RESTORATION

“We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.”

Romans 6:4 ESV

Baptism is a stewardship concept. Take a second look at Genesis 3. Scholars refer to this chapter as “The Fall.” But another layer of understanding is that this is the first stewardship crisis. Adam and Eve were created to oversee the creation that God spoke into existence. It was not theirs. The purpose of their service was to care for creation on behalf of God. Suddenly, everything changed.

With their rebellion came death. Even after they were evicted from the garden, Adam and Eve were never free from their call to stewardship. But now, their work only brought death.

That is, until Christ came to do the work we could never do. His stewardship of God’s Word and will was perfect. The death of Jesus on the cross and the resurrection from the grave changed everything! In baptism, we are reminded that our place in Christ is restored. It is impossible for death to hold us back anymore. The new life we have is a gift. In our stewardship of all things, we are manifesting this new life!

The new life we have in Christ is a restoration of our stewardship. When we are baptized into Christ, we live like no one else. The fear of death is no longer an issue for us as baptized stewards because we are now free to give of ourselves freely.

Recall your baptism today. Remember its picture of your burial with Christ and your resurrection for his purpose as a steward of all things. This is both liberating and purposeful at the same time!



WHY DID THE APOSTLE PAUL NOT SPEAK OF TITHING IN HIS EPISTLES?

THEOLOGICAL ARGUMENTS FOR THE PRACTICE OF TITHING

At present, we have many people who argue that tithing does not apply to us, and that the New Testament does not speak of tithing but of giving offerings. For this reason, it is said that tithing should no longer be practiced in churches, and only offerings should be promoted. Why the Gospels and the book of Hebrews are the only New Testament books that speak of tithing is perhaps too broad a subject to discuss in one article. Therefore, we will mention two theological arguments as to why the apostle Paul does not mention tithing in his epistles.

First Argument: The Purpose of Paul's Apostolic Ministry

The purposes of Paul's ministry were determined by the Jerusalem Council. The Jerusalem Council made some important decisions that were going to impact the priorities in the ministry of the apostle Paul. One of these decisions is not recorded in Acts 15, but Paul does mention it in Galatians 2:9–10, which says,

James, Cephas, and John (who were recognized as the most important people) acknowledged that God had given me this special gift. So they shook hands with Barnabas and me, agreeing to be our

partners. It was understood that we would work among the people who are not Jewish and they would work among Jewish people. The only thing they asked us to do was to remember the poor, the very thing which I was eager to do. (GOD'S WORD Translation)

These agreements made at the Jerusalem Council were given under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and, for this reason, they were able to say, "For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us" (Acts 15:28 NIV). Therefore, it was a priority for Paul to not only preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, but also to collect offerings for the mother church in Jerusalem. The collection of offerings for the church in Jerusalem became a priority for Paul due to the condition of poverty in which the church found itself. In this regard, the *New American Commentary* mentions the level of poverty in which the church in Jerusalem found itself:

From its earliest days the Jerusalem church faced a condition of grinding poverty, . . . [a land with scarce soil] and poor irrigation, Judea was also hard hit in this period of history by famine, war, and overpopulation. . . . So continuous was the economic deprivation of the Judean Christians that they became known collectively as "The Poor."¹



As mentioned above, it was necessary to emphasize the importance of the offering in the other churches to help “the poor” in Jerusalem. Dr. Justo Gonzalez tells us, “This collection is not a responsibility added to Paul’s apostleship; rather it is part and parcel of it.”² According to Gonzalez, the collection of offerings for the poorest in Jerusalem was an essential part of the apostle’s ministry; this is important for interpreting the Pauline writings.

When Paul was commissioned to collect offerings for the church in Jerusalem, he developed a whole theology of *koinonia*. *Koinonia* is not only a word that conveys the concept of having good relationships among brothers, but also of sharing even material things. This theology of *koinonia* will continue to develop even after Paul’s Epistles in such a way that in the book of Luke and Acts, which were originally a single book written after the Pauline Epistles, we see reflected the *koinonia* that Paul emphasized in his writings. Gonzalez tells us that “what Luke was describing here was the understanding of the Christian *koinonia* that had been at the very heart of Paul’s ministry.”³ And it is because of that theology of *koinonia* that Paul emphasizes offerings in his epistles, but it does not mean that Paul disagreed with giving tithes to the local churches.

Another important thing to mention is that the subject of tithing continued to be taught after the Pauline Epistles. Let us remember that the Gospels were written after Paul’s letters, and at no point in time do they deny the practice of tithing. If tithing had not been a practice in Jesus’ and Paul’s time, this would have been mentioned in the Epistles and later in the Gospels. On the contrary, the Gospels, which were written after the Pauline Epistles, affirm that our Lord Jesus spoke about tithing. Jesus, when he rebukes the Pharisees for their legalism and hypocrisy, tells them, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others” (Matthew 23:23 ESV). That is to say, justice, mercy and faith do not free one of the responsibility and duty to tithe.

After the apostolic era, we find bishops of the church writing about tithing. Silverio Valenzuela tells us of at least two bishops who wrote about tithing:

1. Eusebius Jerome (345-420 A.D.) wrote, “I, if I am the Lord’s portion and the offspring of his inheritance, receive no portion from the other tribes; but like the priests and Levites, I support myself by the tithe; serving at the altar, I live by the offerings.”



2. John Chrysostom (347-407), bishop of Antioch, also expressed, “If then (among the Jews) there were dangers for those who failed to pay tithes, think how great the danger of this omission among us must be.”⁴

Tithes remained in force after the apostolic era until today.

Second Argument: The Purpose of the Pauline Epistles

Hermeneutics teaches that the literary genre of the books of the Bible is important to determine the purpose for which they were written. In this sense, Robert Simons’ writing about Paul’s Epistles tells us, “An epistle is a personal communication addressed to a person or a group of people that deals with circumstances known to the author and his addressees.”⁵ These circumstances were often problems and difficulties that the churches were experiencing. The apostle Paul, under the Holy Spirit’s guidance, gave solutions, advice, direction, comfort, and hope through his writings. The epistles were written to respond to their problems and encourage the churches. Paul had no need to talk to them about tithes, since it was apparently not a serious problem for them.

It is also important to remember that the Bible used by the [early] churches was the Old Testament, since the New Testament was just being written. It is also important to keep in mind how Paul viewed the Old Testament: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly equipped for all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16–17 KJ21). When Paul says “Scripture,” he is referring to the Old Testament. Paul’s Epistles consider the Old Testament as a work inspired by God and useful to continue ministering to people’s hearts. Paul did not discard the Old Testament, but we

must emphasize that Paul did not agree with applying those ceremonial and civil laws outside their time and context; for him, those laws were temporary, but he did consider that many of those laws could be interpreted as a type and shadow of the person or action of Christ. Therefore, in that context, God also had something to say to us through those ceremonial and civil laws.

Given the above, the apostle Paul considered that the Old Testament was inspired by God; therefore, his writings had a background and foundation in the Old Testament, and the subject of offerings is a good example of this. As mentioned above, collecting an offering for Jerusalem was something essential in Paul’s ministry, but it does not mean that Paul ignored the subject of tithing. For example, Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 9:13–14 (NIV), “Don’t you know that those who serve in the temple get their food from the temple, and that those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.” In regard to this verse, Paul has in mind the principle mentioned in Numbers 18:21, which affirms that if the Levites lived on tithes, in like manner, the churches should be sustained by tithes and offerings.

There are other theological arguments to defend the practice of tithes in our days, but I consider that the two theological arguments presented in this article are of great importance for reflection and for the apologetics of the subject.

1 Timothy George, *New American Commentary*, vol. 30, *Galatians* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 1994).

2 Justo L. González, *Faith and Wealth: A History of Early Christian Ideas on the Origin, Significance, and Use of Money* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002), 84.

3 González, *Faith and Wealth*, 86.

4 Translated into English from Silverio Manuel Bello Valenzuela, *Ética pastoral para el ministro de hoy* (n.p.: Silverio Bello, 2013), 152.

5 Translated into English from Rober Simons, ed., *Introducción a la teología bíblica* (Bellingham, WA: Editorial Tesoro Bíblico, 2019).



Bishop Ricardo Hinsbis Espinoza | Paraguay National Bishop

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“But earnestly desire the higher gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.”

1 Corinthians 12:31 ESV

Higher gifts. More excellent way. These are words the Holy Spirit gives to Paul about what he desires us to have. The Lord wants you to know that your gifts are in no way inferior. They are glory! Not your glory; they are his glory.

Read 1 Corinthians 12. You will see that some fantastic gifts are called lower gifts: healing, tongues, interpretation. These are all fantastic gifts from the Holy Spirit. It is difficult to see them as lesser gifts.

Until you read what the Lord considers a higher gift. First Corinthians 13 says love is the greatest gift. Jesus says in John 15:13, “Greater love has no one than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend.”

God loved the world so much that he gave us his beloved Son, Jesus. Jesus loved us so much that he gave everything he had: his place in heaven, his reputation, his comfort, his will, his body, his life. He did not even rest in the grave. He preached to souls and brought them out of Sheol. And then he rose from the grave. There is no greater gift of love than to lay down everything for someone else.

God’s love is active! We receive it so that we can give it away. That is the essence of stewardship—freely giving what we have been given! In fact, the financial gifts we provide are lesser gifts. This does not mean they are not important or valuable. But they are worthless in eternity’s eyes if they are not connected to love. God’s love comes to us, and through us, to others. We become a conduit of love that flows out to those who need it. Action is required. Financial resources are often required. Stewarding what we have been given by God will result in amazing results when we give them out packaged in love! Together, let’s see what the Lord will do with our gifts!

CARETAKERS OF GOD'S LOVE



STEWARDED AN ABUNDANT MINDSET

IN A SCARCITY
DRIVEN WORLD

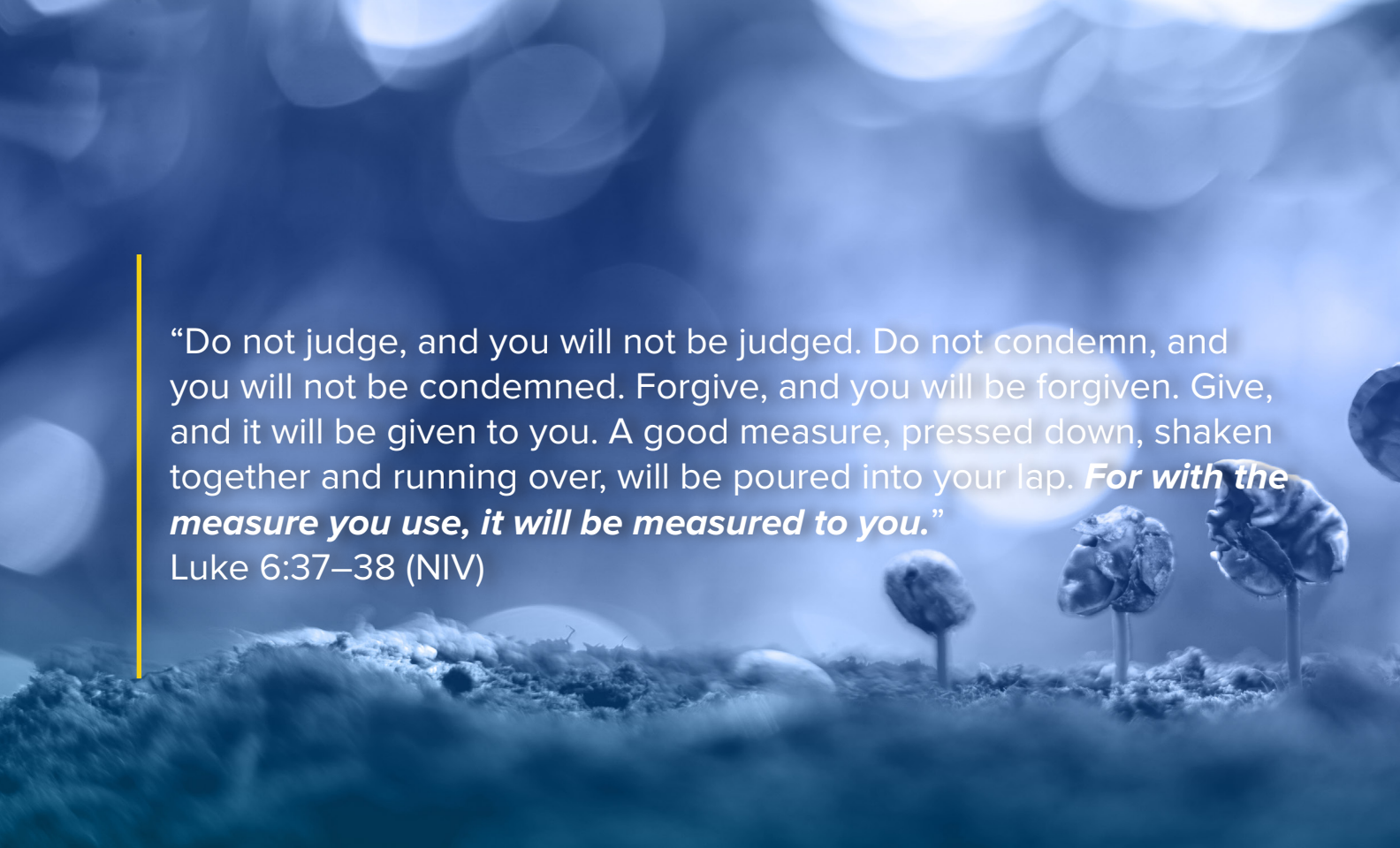


Jacob Coleman | Accredited Ministry Development and Spirit & Life Seminary Business Office Manager

Stewardship is defined as the conducting, supervising, or managing of something. Some sources further define it to specify that the “something” may have been entrusted directly from one person or source to another. We typically see this term most commonly used in conjunction with matters of finances, at least within our biblically oriented circles. It is also frequently used with matters of abilities, talents, blessings, and other popular topics we aim to teach regarding the proper maintenance of things entrusted to us by God. Why is it that we end there? Why are we so frequently short-sighted to only view those gifts and blessings as things worthy of stewardship? Every day, and every moment within each day, is something given to

us by God that we are to steward. It begins with our mindset and our speech—two things we throw away so quickly without any thought. We should be stewarding a mindset of abundance and a speech pattern of positivity, but both are easier said than done, given the context and state of the world in which we live.

The truth is, we live in a scarcity-driven world. With this as our starting place of reality each day, it is easy to hold to a negative mindset and not even realize it. Sure, we may have an abundant mindset when it comes to stewarding finances or talents, but we have been taught how to do that. However, on a day-to-day basis, we make decisions or respond to opportunities



“Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. ***For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.***”
Luke 6:37–38 (NIV)

from a perspective we might not be aware we have. For reference, the economy, inflation, and prices are all driven higher due to a perceived or real lack, simply put. The key here is that we as a society do not view things based on how *much* is available; we focus and respond from the perspective of how *little* is available. This applies to every area of life. We decline to spend time at certain events because of how little time we perceive ourselves to have. We hesitate to engage in generosity-based acts because we perceive ourselves to have a limited number of resources. We refrain from engaging in activities because we perceive ourselves to only possess a minimal amount of ability. The perception of a negative mindset cuts us off at the knees when we have the capacity to be and to accomplish so much more.

Luke 6:37–38 (NIV) says, “Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. ***For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.***” The last line here is important but is commonly cut from popular citations. There are many examples throughout Scripture where it implies that we can expect to receive an equal or greater portion to what we have given. Two common references, 2 Corinthians 9:6–11 and Malachi 3:6–10,

echo this sentiment. A negative mindset, then, keeps us from giving the fullness of what we are capable of giving, and likewise hinders us from receiving the fullness of what God desires to pour out on us. What happens when we flip the switch? How much more powerful is it to change our thinking from “I only have an hour to do something, and that’s not enough” to “I have an hour I can put to use”? “I only have \$5.00, which is not enough to give” becomes “I have \$5.00 that I can use to be generous.” And, “I’m not good enough to help” becomes “I’m willing to do what I am able.” The hour, the \$5.00, and the ability do not change, but when the mindset changes, we go from withholding ourselves to giving that which could have been withheld because of a changed perspective of abundance. As we rise above what we perceive our current capacity to be, we are able to give more freely, which opens the doors for a greater measure to be poured back.

This is why it is important that we take proper stewardship of our minds and align our thinking with God’s Word and his desires. A positive mindset must be intentional because it is not the natural or common standard in the world. It is easy to be influenced by circumstances or the people around us, so we must constantly manage ourselves to ensure our perspective is focused appropriately. An important tool to achieve this comes through stewarding our speech.



Proverbs 18:20–21 says, “From the fruit of their mouth a person’s stomach is filled; with the harvest of their lips they are satisfied. The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.” Our words are powerful. The way we speak, whether it be positive or negative, frames our mindset and perspective. If a person constantly uses negative language about themselves or their circumstances, they maintain a broken self-image and have extreme difficulty changing circumstances. Whenever we tell ourselves, “I’m not good at that,” “today looks to be a bad day,” or make any other disparaging remark, we are inviting that negativity to exist.

On the other hand, when a person uses positive language, they see growth and change, and they are more likely to accomplish their goals or make changes. The same applies when we are speaking to others—negativity breeds negativity, while positivity breeds positivity. Our minds latch onto and focus on the things we say and how we say them, or what is said and how we receive it. This is reinforced by 1 Peter 3:8–11, Proverbs 17:27–28, and Proverbs 12:18–19. We do not have to make drastic changes; small changes like swapping “I’ll try” with “I will” can make a big difference in altering the mind’s perspective and approach. If I go to “try” something, I am making an attempt with the underlying thought that things may or may not end well. Therefore, I can give up at any point, as “try” leaves out

the point of certainty. If I say “I will” do something, there is certainty and definitiveness. There is no room for interpretation.

Correcting the way we speak to ourselves is paramount in developing the proper mindset. When we speak abundance over lack, we are able to perceive that abundance, which in turn lets us act from a position of abundance. We must reign in flippant speech and thinking. We must constantly monitor, evaluate, and manage these tools that were gifted to us and steward every aspect of our being as much as possible. We need to take ownership of each day, each moment, and make sure we are approaching this world, which is fueled by negativity and a perception of lack, from a position of God’s abundance. Once we do, we will truly start to see the shift. We will be open to more opportunities that we may have glossed over, we will see personal growth from our speech along with the seeds of life planted in others, and we will be able to operate from the alignment and position God has designed for us to launch each day. As we steward the mindset of abundance and act and speak accordingly, our eyes will be opened to better see the fullness from which God operates, and we (his people) will be more ready to receive the full measure of what he has prepared for us because the measure we use will be measured back to us.

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Duncan COGOP
Pastor: Israel Duncan
April 14, 2024



BRAZIL

IDP Varjota
Pastor: Fabiano Rodrigues de Cunha
December 12, 2023



OKLAHOMA, US

Harvest Church of Stigler
Pastor: Jerry Stevens
March 17, 2024



BRAZIL

Prado Comunidade Santo Antonio
Pastor: Aclesia Santana
September 30, 2023



WASHINGTON, US

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BRAZIL

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