

GOD FIRST

2023 Stewardship
Week of Revival



GOD FIRST
ADVENTIST STEWARDSHIP MINISTRIES

Seventh-day Adventist Church™ *South Pacific*

GOD FIRST

2023 Stewardship Week of Revival

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Published by General Conference Stewardship Ministries

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Introduction

"God first" is the motto of the General Conference Stewardship Ministries Department. As a truth that originated from Jesus (Matthew 6:33), this slogan is much more than a catchy hash-tag on our social media platforms. It challenges all of us to move from a mere philosophical acquiescence of the importance of God to a practical adoption of the right priorities in our lives.



Day 1

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Putting God First

Observe the nature that surrounds us. Hear the song of the birds. Gaze in awe at the picturesque romp of the squirrels and deer. Admire the intensity of the colours of the flowers, their exquisite perfume, and the soft texture of their velvety petals. Who designed such beautiful nature? The Only and True God, our Creator, Provider, and Redeemer.

In confirmation, John wrote: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made" (John 1:1-3).



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Daring to Go Deeper and Putting First Things First

One time a professor was seeking to teach the importance of making priorities to her class. To do so, she pulled out a large glass jar that was filled with fist-size rocks. She then asked her class if the jar was full. "Yes," they all responded. Then she brought out a pail of pea-size chunks of gravel and shook them into the jar, down around the larger rocks. "Is the jar full now?" she asked again. "Probably not," they responded. They were getting wiser. Then she brought out a container of sand and poured it into the jar ... "You have to set your priorities in life consciously, otherwise, the details of life, the sand, the gravel, etc., will swallow up your time."



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Cultivating Quality Relationships

What kind of marriage do you have? Do you feel happy and satisfied most of the time, or do you mostly find yourself sad and angry, wishing you had listened to your parents about taking things more slowly?

It doesn't take much to realise—once you begin to read the marriage research literature or speak to other married couples you know well—every couple will experience difficult times in their marriage. There are no perfect marriages because there are no perfect people. However, many of the couples we work with tend to see their marriage as dysfunctional ... Yet it is very normal for two imperfect people to have differences in their view of the world. This means every marriage will experience the challenge of dealing with conflict.



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Developing Mental Habits

Many people know what medicine to take or natural remedy to apply for an upset stomach, a sore throat, or a sprained muscle. And if they are perplexed by some physical malady, they will make the necessary arrangement to resort to a physician or health practitioner. Would they go to a mental health professional if they experienced thoughts, feelings, and behaviours that disturbed them significantly? Probably not. And probably because of stigma. These examples remind us of how poorly equipped we are to face adverse mental and emotional symptoms. We cannot forget that it is our duty, as God's stewards, to manage our health, and there is no health without mental health.



Day 5

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When You Pray for Souls, Believe!

Have you ever asked God to give you something you want, only to quickly dismiss what He gives you because you fail to recognise that the answer to your prayer is right in front of you? Have you ever prayed for something and then rejected it after God gave it to you? Well, I must confess that I have been there many times. A few years ago, I was visiting people in a community, intending to start Bible studies in preparation for an evangelistic meeting. I prayed to God to lead me to people in the community who were open to receiving the gospel. People whom God was already working on. People who were hungry for the Truth ... To my surprise, God answered my prayer precisely as I had asked. He sent me to the house of a lady with all the characteristics I prayed for, except she did not fit my stereotype. I did not recognise her as one who was seeking after God.



Day 6 30

Sabbath Keeping

The seventh-day Sabbath is an important segment of time that we are called to manage. It is essential to re-visit how to spend these sacred hours, as it has a repercussion over our being.

My Personal Experience

While writing this article, my (Hiskia) mind is wandering away reminiscing the good times I had in my childhood with my parents, and the Sabbath keeping way which was adopted by my family more than a half-century ago. I was so blessed to experience such wonderful times of how we prepared for the Sabbath to begin, welcoming and celebrating that special and blessed day.

Here's the *Sabbath regulation* in my childhood home: On Sabbath, it was absolutely no ironing, cleaning, or cooking.



Day 7 34

Making Windows in Heaven

Recently, at a Sabbath lunch, we were enjoying our favourite dish, a good old theological discussion. After some time, the conversation moved toward the issue of rewards and blessings. Does God currently reward the faithful, or are God's rewards reserved for the future? What's the nature of God's reward: spiritual, material, or both? If there is a present reward, what's the purpose?

Interestingly, various positions emerge among us. Christians are divided on the issue of God's reward. For some, it is all about obeying God to enjoy a larger, present blessing, while others reject the concept of a present reward. This situation led me to revisit Malachi 3:10–12, a passage regularly cited as God's reward for those who practice faithful tithing.



Day 8 38

Acceptable & Unacceptable Offerings

There are plenty of indications in the Bible implying that the Lord evaluates, assesses, and rates our giving or its absence. The fact that He purposely sat opposite to the treasury (Mark 12:41) and that He rated the poor widow's offering (Mark 12:43) should tell us that even today, He is watching and assessing our giving patterns.

Another important truth is that some offerings are accepted and valued by Him, while others, irrespective of their amount, cannot be accepted and become even offensive to Him. What are some of the conditions for God to accept an offering?



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Introduction

God first” is the motto of the General Conference Stewardship Ministries Department. As a truth that originated from Jesus (Matthew 6:33), this slogan is much more than a catchy hash-tag on our social media platforms. It challenges all of us to move from a mere philosophical acquiescence of the importance of God to a practical adoption of the right priorities in our lives.

It states that it is not sufficient to do the right things; the proper sequence or order by which things are performed and organised is crucial. For example, unless we allocate our very first moments of the day to God, our first activity after we wake up, He cannot fulfil His promise that “all these things shall be added to you” (Matthew 6:33, NKJV). Christians longing for God may not be thriving in their spiritual and secular life for lack of putting God first.

This *Week of Stewardship Revival* aims to help church members grow in practical ways by cultivating a *God First* lifestyle. Of course, we all know this is only possible when we receive a change of heart, operated by the Holy Spirit. This is our greatest need! The transformation process is activated and expands when we choose to commit and recommit. The *Week of Stewardship Revival* provides the space for this to happen.

Even though the *God First* principle should affect all areas of life, these messages cover eight aspects related to developing our intimacy with God and our trust in Him.

Besides using these presentations during church meetings in the context of the *Week of Stewardship Revival*, you may decide to use them in small groups, Holy Convocation events, as preaching materials, or simply as personal devotional readings during the year.

Our first thanks are to God, our Creator, Provider, and Sustainer. However, we cannot forget those who have allowed Him to use them while writing sermons: Guillermo Biaggi, Melody Mason, Willie and Elaine Oliver, Julian Melgosa, Ramon Canals, Hiskia and Ellen Missah, and Aniel Barbe.

May the Lord bless His people as He uses this simple but efficient tool to help them to put Him first.

Marcos Faiock Bomfim
GC Stewardship Ministries Director

Day 1

Putting God First

By Guillermo E. Biaggi

Observe the nature that surrounds us. Hear the songs of the birds. Gaze in awe at the picturesque romp of the squirrels and deer. Admire the intensity of the colours of the flowers, their exquisite perfume, and the soft texture of their velvety petals. Who designed such beautiful nature? The Only and True God, our Creator, Provider, and Redeemer.

In confirmation, John wrote: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made" (John 1:1–3). "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). "The next day John [the Baptist] saw Jesus coming toward him and said, 'Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!'" (John 1:29). "Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, 'We have found the Messiah' (that is, the

Christ)" (John 1:40, 41). "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). The Word of God and nature present us, without a doubt, the wonderful work of the Intelligent Designer, Creator, and Jesus Christ our Redeemer.

Furthermore, David shared the appropriate human response:

"Wealth and honour come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all. Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name. But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand" (1 Chronicles 29:12–14).

What an extraordinary worldview the Holy Scriptures provides for our life's journey. The Lord, our God, is the Creator (therefore, He owns all the universe), and He provides for us to be able to put Him first. However, we remain human and fragile, and our decisions and promises often fail! So, how could we make a lasting and happy determination



to put God first in our lives? As well as putting Him in the first place in the administration of how much or little He provides us to manage?

Five elements can assist us in putting God first. We'll use the word "first" as an acronym:

1. "F"-Faith: To put God first, we will need faith. "Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see" (Hebrews 11:1). It's finally a matter of trust. He is God. He is the Creator. He is the One that provides for our needs (Philippians 4:19). He is our Saviour, and He "came to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10)—you and me. Therefore, as we "know through reading Holy Scriptures, faith will grow" (Romans 10:17), and we will be able to have faith in Him.

Solomon also explains it clearly: "Trust [to have faith] in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit

to him, and he will make your paths straight" (Proverbs 3:5, 6).

I have reflected on the great truth found in this Ellen G. White quotation: "The truth and the glory of God are inseparable; it is impossible for us, with the Bible within our reach, to honour God by erroneous opinions. Many claim that it matters not what one believes if his life is only right. But the life is

moulded by the faith. If light and truth is within our reach, and we neglect to improve the privilege of hearing and seeing it, we virtually reject it; we are choosing darkness rather than light."¹

How could we make a lasting
and happy determination to
put God first in our lives?

I want to choose the light. I want to choose Jesus. I want to put God first by faith, in all the areas of my life, including the management of what He has given me. What about you?

2. "I"-Invisible: To put "God first," we will not only need faith, but also fix our eyes on the "invisible," like the experience of Moses: "By faith he left Egypt,

¹ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1950), 597.

not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible" (Hebrews 11:27). Can we make a free choice daily and decide to settle our eyes on Jesus? (Hebrews 12:2).

The Lord is invisible but real. Moses also declared: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is *one*" (Deuteronomy 6:4, emphasis added). He wants to enlighten our path!

Ellen White writes, "The Lord calls upon you ... to look at these things with eyes enlightened not by worldly advisers, but by His Spirit. Take the Word as it reads ... Place yourself where the riches of the glory of heaven shall shine before you and behind you and on every side of you, because you are all light in the Lord—*Letter 110, August 8, 1899*, to a woman of means."²

To trust in the only One. To daily decide to come in His presence (our daily devotional time, to pray, meditate on His promises, and study the Bible), and to have a heart desire like David: "One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple" (Psalm 27:4).

Do we daily take time to contemplate the "beauty of the Lord"? Let's take time each day, early in the morning (Psalm 5:3), to contemplate "the splendour of his holiness" (Psalm 29:2) and to admire the qualities of His beautiful character: love (Jeremiah 31:3; John 3:16); everlasting (Hebrews 13:8); holy, true, and just (Psalm 75:7; Revelation 6:10); merciful, faithful, and compassionate (Exodus 33:19; Lamentations 3:22, 23; Hebrews 13:5). What a beautiful God we have!

3. "R"-Righteousness: To put God first, we will not only need faith and to fix our eyes on the invisible, but we will also need to experience His amazing righteousness. Paul, conscious of that fact, exclaims: "And be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith" (Philippians 3:9). Yes, we need His transforming power in our lives (Romans 12:2) in

order to be able to "choose correctly" and to "seek *first* his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matthew 6:33, emphasis added).

When we choose to put God first, it's because we realise He has a plan for each one of us, and Paul is assuring such extraordinary privilege for us: "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:20, 21).

4. "S"-Serving God: Putting God first will not only need an act of faith, to fix our eyes on the invisible, and experience His righteousness, but most importantly, to answer His call to serve Him!

Isaiah explains this important experience in His life, which exemplifies what our Lord wants to do with each one of us, "Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?'" (Isaiah 6:8).

Together with Isaiah, are we ready to willingly answer such a crucial call? "Here am I. *Send me!*" (Isaiah 6:8, emphasis added). To experience the privilege to put God first and to daily answer His call, we must say with confidence: "I will go."

Ellen G. White says in *Steps to Christ*:

What you need to understand is the true force of the will. This is the governing power in the nature of man, the power of decision, or of choice. Everything depends on the right action of the will. The power of choice God has given to men; it is theirs to exercise. You cannot change your heart, you cannot of yourself give to God its affections; but you can *choose* to serve Him. You can give Him your will; He will then work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. Thus your whole nature will be brought under the control of the Spirit of Christ; your affections will be centred upon Him, your thoughts will be in harmony with Him.³

Deciding to put God first will envelope your life with peace as you commit your life to serving Him.

² White, *The Upward Look* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1982), 234.

³ White, *Steps to Christ* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1956), 47.

"The soul consecrated to the service of Christ has a peace that the world cannot give or take away."⁴

5. "T"-Treasures: Putting God first will need from us, not only an act of faith to fix our eyes on the invisible, and experience His righteousness, as we decide to serve God, but will also be reflected in the way we manage the treasures that our heavenly Father puts in our hands, and if we are willing to put God first in its management. As good stewards, we want to hear from our Lord the words of approval: "His master replied, "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!" (Matthew 25:21).

In this world, we are fighting a spiritual battle with forces of evil, but our Lord wants us to be successful and to overcome all types of temptations, and to always honour Him. But the question is: "Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me. But you ask, "How are we robbing you?" In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse—your whole nation—because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,' says the LORD Almighty, 'and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it'" (Malachi 3:8–10).

What a blessing it will be for our lives, families, and churches when we apply God's instructions in our personal experience! "Those churches who are the most systematic and liberal in sustaining the cause of God are the most prosperous spiritually."⁵



Guillermo Biaggi, DMin, is vice president at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

My Commitment

To pray daily this week.
"Lord, help me to put
You first. Help me to be
faithful and generous
with the resources You
have used to bless my
life and family. I want to
put You first in all areas
of my life and family,
and to be faithful and
generous with tithe and
regular, proportional,
and systematic offerings.
In Jesus' Holy name.
Amen"

⁴ White, *My Life Today* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1952), 176.

⁵ White, *Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 3 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), 405.



Day 2

Daring to go Deeper and Putting First Things First!

By Melody Mason



One time a professor was seeking to teach the importance of making priorities to her class. To do so, she pulled out a large glass jar that was filled with fist-size rocks. She then asked her class if the jar was full. “Yes,” they all responded. Then she brought out a pail of pea-size chunks of gravel and shook them into the jar, down around the larger rocks. “Is the jar full now?” she asked again. “Probably not,” they responded. They were getting wiser. Then she brought out a container of sand and poured it into the jar. It filled all the cracks around the small and large rocks. “What about now?” she asked. “No!” they responded with certainty. She smiled. “You are right,” she said, as she brought out a pitcher of water and poured it into the jar.

The water soaked down through the sand and around the rocks. She stepped back with a smile. “So, what am I trying to teach you through this object lesson?” One student piped up, “You’re telling us that no matter how busy we are, we always squeeze a bit more into our schedule.” Everyone

laughed. But she shook her head. “No! What I am telling you is *learn to put the big rocks in the jar first*, and then fit everything else around them! You have to set your priorities in life consciously, otherwise, the details of life, the sand, the gravel etc., will swallow up your time.”

And so it is with our lives today—we need to learn to put the big rocks (spiritual priorities) in our life first. This applies to our daily devotional practices, to all our stewardship habits, including our tithing and offering practices. When we put God first, it always pays in more ways than we can count. However, in today’s fast-paced world, this can often be a big challenge.

My Personal “Going Deeper” Story

When I was a young adult, I probably could have won an award for being busy, modern-day “Martha.” By college, I was involved in multiple ministries and young adult groups, and already traveling here and there around the world. By the time I hit my 30s, I had already been in nearly thirty countries, volunteered at orphanages, held

successful evangelistic campaigns, taught school in faraway jungles, and been involved with various forms of medical work as a registered nurse. However, it was about this time that I recognised there was something significant missing in my life. I was too busy, and I desperately needed a deeper walk with Jesus.

It's easy to fool ourselves into thinking that making a decision to serve God is the *equivalent* to knowing God. But God is calling us to be with Him before we go and serve Him (Mark 3:14). We cannot give to others what we have not received ourselves by sitting at His feet. In fact, we are told that when Jesus returns there will be a group that will say, "Lord, I did this and I did this ..." And He will say, "Yes, but I never knew you! You were working apart from me" (see Matthew 7:22, 23).

While the "going deeper process" was a bit painful, I'm so grateful that God finally opened my eyes to my great need. As I began pouring over the Word each morning, often with tears running down my face, I fell in love with Jesus as never before. My daily devotions became a vibrant worship experience that I couldn't wait for each morning. I also learned that as I made deep, unrushed time with God a daily priority (even if I skipped a little sleep or cut out some other activity), everything else in life began to flow more smoothly.

Whenever we give God *first* place, He always gives back *so much more*. In Matthew 6:33 we are told, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (NKJV).

Practical Keys for Going Deeper

Once you've committed to put God first, how do you protect and guard your time with Him each day while seeking a deeper outpouring of His Spirit? The following are some of my personal tips:

1. Find your own solitary place to meet with God. Mark 1:35 tells us, "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he [Jesus] went out and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed" (KJV).

2. Go to bed so you can get up early. If we are going to experience all God has for us, we have to be intentional about saying "no" to some things at night so we can say "yes" to the Lord in the morning. If you struggle waking up early, just ask God to wake you up. He will!

3. Turn off all distractions, if possible. When you first get up in the morning, avoid turning on any noise or distractions that would pull your attention from God. Also, try to refrain from checking your emails, text messages, social media accounts, or any other electronic communication. Utilising the "airplane mode" feature on your smartphone, until you've completed devotions, is a great practice. The author E. M. Bounds writes, "If God is not first in

our thoughts and efforts in the morning, He will be in the last place the remainder of the day."¹

4. Confess your sins and remove spiritual breaches. Oftentimes, people feel like there's a wall between them and God. That's because there are unconfessed sins and spiritual breaches that need to be addressed. Pray and ask God to search your heart and show you those areas that need to be made right (Psalm 66:18; Psalm 139:23, 24; 1 John 1:9).

5. Ask for a daily baptism of the Holy Spirit. With the Holy Spirit comes all other blessings, but we need to ask for it (Luke 11:13). Ellen White tells us, "We may have had a measure of the Spirit of God, but by prayer and faith we are continually to seek more of the Spirit."²

6. Take time for both prayer and Bible study. There's not necessarily a wrong or right way to

"Put forth your most earnest
endeavours to obtain those things
upon which God places value, and
which Christ gave His precious life
that you might secure."
Ellen G. White, *Counsels on
Stewardship*, p. 225

¹ E. M. Bounds, *The Complete Work of E. M. Bounds on Prayer* (Ada, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 464.

² Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1944), 508.

have devotions. The important point is that we do. Look for Jesus as you study. Also, as you read the Word, personalise it and turn it into a prayer. When you pray, claim God's promises! Last but not least, ask God how He wants you to apply what you've studied to your life *today*.

7. Keep asking for a deeper walk. The Bible tells us, "Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us" (Ephesians 3:20, NKJV). God has so much in store for our lives, if we will just keep daring to ask for more.

8. Last but not least, keep God with you as you go throughout your day. God is to go *with us*, to stay *with us*, and to abide *with us*.

He wants to walk with us like He walked with Enoch. "We may keep so near to God that in every unexpected trial our thoughts will turn to Him as naturally as the flower turns to the sun."³

Put your devotional time with Jesus as your first daily priority, and you'll reap rich benefits in all aspects of life. It is the foremost condition to grow as a faithful steward of God's given resources. Try it! You will see!



Melody Mason is a resource coordinator for the Ministerial Association of the General Conference, and author of *Daring to Ask for More* and *Daring to Live by Every Word*.

My Commitment

To set apart the first moments of each day to commune with the Lord through prayer, the study of the Bible, Spirit of Prophecy, Sabbath School lesson, and to participate in family worship.

We have to be intentional about saying "no" to some things at night so we can say "yes" to the Lord in the morning.

³ White, *Steps to Christ* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1956), 99.



Day 3

Cultivating Quality Relationships

By Willie & Elaine Oliver

What kind of marriage do you have? Do you feel happy and satisfied most of the time, or do you mostly find yourself sad and angry, wishing you had listened to your parents about taking things more slowly?

It doesn't take much to realise—once you begin to read the marriage research literature or speak to other married couples you know well—every couple will experience difficult times in their marriage. There are no perfect marriages because there are no perfect people. However, many of the couples we work with tend to see their marriage as dysfunctional.

When the word dysfunctional is used in the context of relationships, it is referring to a collapse of that which is normal in a marriage relationship. Yet it is very normal for two imperfect people to have differences in their view of the world. This means every marriage will experience the challenge of dealing with conflict.

When couples ignore their fundamental differences and only deal with them when an event or episode takes place, this approach tends to build resentment and destroy the peace of any marriage. Even when couples have a relatively healthy marriage, if they are not deliberate about talking through their differences in a calm and controlled way, this can lead to despair and a feeling of wanting out of the relationship.

While there are many factors that contribute to a dysfunctional relationship, these may include abuse, abandonment, addictions, and psychological disorders such as anxiety, depression, and clinically assessed personality disorders. Nevertheless, many couples experience dysfunction because they've

never learned to communicate well, which often leads to feelings of hopelessness and frustration. These feelings can easily escalate to thinking they married the wrong person, and the only way to escape this nightmare is by getting a divorce.

Couples who find success in marriage learn to remove destructive or negative patterns of relating to each other. Instead of getting frustrated and accusing their partner of always doing things the wrong way, each partner focuses on what they can do to be a better spouse. These couples tend to see their marriage relationship as a cup that is half full, capitalising on the strengths of their mate, rather than seeing their marriage as a cup that is half empty, concentrating on the weakness of their partner and relationship.

The good news is that it is possible to cultivate quality relationships. Both people in the relationship can choose to build their marriage by finding the good in the other person and changing the way they view their mate. Instead of seeing their spouse as an adversary, they can choose to play on the same team.

So, how can couples learn to be better stewards of their marriage relationship? The truth is, just like people are committed to returning a faithful tithe and giving a generous offering, they can recognise their marriage as being responsible for reflecting the image of God to the world.

Here are seven habits that will help any marriage to cultivate quality relationships:

1. See your marriage as a gift from God. The more you see your marriage as a worthwhile asset and a gift from God the more positively you will feel about your marriage relationship. Since your brain is wired to believe what you tell it, change your self-talk and start telling yourself that you have a great marriage. If you do this regularly, you and your spouse will soon begin to believe it and experience it. The Bible is correct when it says: “If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes”

(Mark 9:23, NKJV).

2. Pray regularly for your marriage and your spouse. Because God created marriage, it is essential to keep Him at the centre of your relationship. Use your faith on purpose by asking God for patience and the desire to be understanding and kind to your mate. If you believe God sees everything and knows everything, then you will want to be mindful of what you say or do to your spouse.

This is the reason Ellen White states in *The Adventist Home*:

“And as your love for [God] increases, your love for each other will grow deeper and stronger” (p. 106).¹

Therefore, your prayer should be for God to do for your marriage “exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us” (Ephesians 3:20, NKJV).

3. Learn and practice effective communication skills. Most humans learn to communicate from birth. Yet most people have developed flawed and defective ways of communicating. Husbands and wives bring those communication patterns—

good and bad—into their marriage. This is the reason each partner needs to be willing to make alterations in their relational and communication styles to improve the quality of their marriage relationship. If couples took the time to genuinely listen to each other and see things from the other’s point of view, many concerns would be resolved. The wise biblical counsel in James 1:19 says: “Let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger” (ESV).

4. Find out what you spouse likes, and keep doing it. Find out what your spouse doesn’t like, and quit doing it! Before marriage, couples take great pride in being their best selves. They are willing to do anything to make the other person happy. After the wedding and honeymoon, though,

Just like people are committed to returning a faithful tithe and giving a generous offering, they can recognise their marriage as being responsible for reflecting the image of God to the world.

¹ Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1952), 106.

many couples tend to quit doing special things for each other and begin to drift apart. If couples employed the golden rule, “So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them” (Matthew 7:12, ESV), their marriage relationship would grow and fill them with contentment and God’s joy.

5. Forgive often. In marriage couples will inevitably hurt each other. We are not necessarily talking about abuse of any kind—although that is also a possibility—but about the realities embedded in imperfect human relationships. Without ever meaning to hurt the other, partners often say or do things that do. This is the reason you must learn to forgive. Forgiving someone who has harmed you is the hardest part of loving, and yet there is no true love without forgiveness. Forgiving doesn’t mean becoming a doormat or releasing the other person from responsibility. Still, forgiving helps to begin the process of healing from your hurt and from the need to punish the other person. Forgiveness also helps to narrow the gap that has developed in the relationship. Of course, you can only learn to forgive when you are under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, who said: “And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors” (Matthew 6:12, NKJV).

6. Learn to laugh. The ancient adage “Laughter is good medicine” is still true today. To be sure, medical research suggests laughter has physiological and neurological benefits. Laughter helps to reduce stress, stimulates the immune system, reduces blood pressure, bonds couples together, and keeps the relationship fresh. Every married couple needs to find things to laugh about, and should stop stressing about the small stuff. Proverbs 17:22 reminds us: “A merry heart does good, like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones” (NKJV).

7. Make emotional deposits. Relationships—especially marriage—work like a bank account. When you do or say nice things to each other, you make emotional deposits in each other’s emotional bank account. However, when you hurt each other or don’t keep promises, you make emotional withdrawals. The more money we deposit in our bank accounts, the more money we have. The more withdrawals we make, the less money we have. If we make more emotional withdrawals than emotional deposits in our spouse’s emotional bank account, we end up bankrupt. So, determine today to be intentional about making emotional deposits in your spouse’s emotional bank account. After all, the Bible says in Colossians 3:14: “But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection” (NKJV).

When you are faithful in your stewardship, God opens the windows of heaven and pours out abundant blessings. When you are patient, kind, faithful, and gentle with each other in marriage, God’s blessings overflow not only in your homes, but in the homes of neighbours, relatives, and friends.

Purpose in your heart to begin practicing these seven habits in your marriage today.



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My Commitment

To improve my relationships by growing in faithfulness, forgiveness, and loving as a principle.



Day 4

Developing Mental Healthy Habits

By Julian Melgosa



Many people know what medicine to take or natural remedy to apply for an upset stomach, a sore throat, or a sprained muscle. And if they are perplexed by some physical malady, they will make the necessary arrangement to resort to a physician or health practitioner. Would they go to a mental health professional if they experienced thoughts, feelings, and behaviours that disturbed them significantly? Probably not. And probably because of stigma. These examples remind us of how poorly equipped we are to face adverse mental and emotional symptoms. We cannot forget that it is our duty, as God's stewards, to manage our health, and there is no health without mental health.

What is Mental Health?

As with physical health, mental health cannot be defined as the absence of illness. Many people suffer and cause others to suffer with partial symptoms which do not meet a full diagnosis.

Mental health consists of three core areas:

thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. When someone enjoys psychological/mental wellbeing; utilises their abilities well; faces stress with reasonable success; looks at the past with satisfaction, at the present with calm, and at the future with hope; relates pleasantly with others; and does their work productively and happily, we may conclude that they are mentally healthy. Those with mental and emotional problems tend to have difficulty in one or more of these basic areas of mental health: thoughts, feelings/emotions, and behaviours.

People suffering from unhealthy thought patterns may be negativistic in the analysis they make of themselves, their environment, other people, and the future. They may also be suspicious of others, assess issues as either black or white, approach challenges with fearful thoughts, and think illogically to arrive at catastrophic conclusions.

People with problems at the feeling level may get upset when faced with small difficulties; feel unwarranted envy or jealousy; be impatient; feel easily discouraged; experience anger, resentment, vindictiveness, and lack of empathy.

Those with behavioural disturbances may avoid social contact, display verbal and/or physical aggression, carry out their duties poorly (at work, school, or family), sob without reason or laugh out of context. They may be also inclined to addictions (chemical or behavioural), may have eating and sleeping disturbances, may have difficulty enjoying life, and may even have problems with the law. Interestingly, these three areas of mental health are closely related to each other: Thoughts determine psychological states (feelings, emotions), which in turn give way to behaviour. The Bible points out this connection: “For as he thinks in his heart, so is he.” (Proverbs 23:7, NKJV) and “Every prudent man acts with knowledge” (Proverbs 13:16). Ellen G. White places this issue not only at the level of mental health and personal wellbeing, but embedded in our moral fibre: “If the *thoughts* are wrong the feelings will be wrong, and the thoughts and *feelings* combined make up the moral character ... If you yield to your impressions and allow your

thoughts to run in a channel of suspicion, doubt, and repining, you will be among the most unhappy of mortals, and your lives will prove a failure” (emphasis added).¹

Stewards of Mental Health

“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?” (1 Corinthians 6:19, NKJV). We most often view this statement in terms of the healthy food we should eat and the alcohol, drugs, and tobacco from which we should abstain. But are not our mental processes, which constitute the executive function of our body, a major part of God’s temple? In his next letter, the apostle Paul writes to the same believers in Corinth, exhorting them to be clean not only in the flesh, but also in the spirit: “Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the *flesh and spirit*, perfecting holiness in the fear

of God” (2 Corinthians 7:1, NKJV, emphasis added).

We are stewards of all the assets that God has entrusted us. This includes our mind, feelings/emotions, and behaviours. We are called to adopt not only physical but also mental stewardship measures, as Ellen G. White says: “We are to use every means that God has placed within our reach for the government and cultivation of our thoughts.”²

Stewards of our Thoughts

Mental health is partly dependent on the way we process thoughts. Take worry, for example. We may be very concerned with matters that are important to our lives and those of our loved ones. We may consider and debate possible solutions. This is legitimate. But when these thoughts become compulsive, exaggerated, and preoccupied with things that *might* happen, we cross the line into the realm of worry, which is useless at best, and could

be a precursor of anxiety and obsession. This kind of thinking must be rejected as early in the thought chain as possible.

Another example is negativistic thinking. (“This financial crisis will never end,” or “I will *not* adapt to my new boss.”) Some people apply this thinking pattern to most situations

“I believe as I have done for years that the health of our people will be much improved if we will make God first and last and best in everything—appetite, taste, and habits to be carefully guarded.”
Ellen G. White, Letters and Manuscripts, vol. 4 (1883-1886), Letter 92a, 1886

they encounter. For decades, the psychological literature has shown that individuals who choose this thinking pattern are at a higher risk of depressive, obsessive-compulsive, and anxious tendencies than the general population.

As a steward of my thoughts, I must find ways to dispel erroneous, negativistic, and toxic thoughts. With God’s help, I can purposefully place my thoughts on content that will nourish my mind (Philippians 4:8). We know that religious practices, such as reading Psalms or Proverbs in the Bible, can help us to dispel unwanted thoughts and promote

¹ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), 310.

² White, *In Heavenly Places* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1967), 164.

solace and positive emotions.

Lastly, and most importantly, the wrong kind of thinking will bring about moral defilement. This was Jesus' point when he said that "out of the heart [mind] come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what defile a person" (Matthew 15: 19, 20). This principle can be a sure guide to guard ourselves from the thoughts that drive us to immoral consequences.

Stewards of our Emotions

Emotions generally follow thoughts; that is why managing our thoughts is so crucial to avoid harmful moods and promote healthy ones. Emotions can also sometimes occur because of other people, the environment, or may emerge for no apparent reason. Even when caused by circumstances, as steward of my emotions, I must learn how to manage and transform negative emotions into positive ones. I can also benefit by learning how to endure painful emotional experiences that are unavoidable by adopting an attitude of hope, as outlined by Jesus.

A helpful passage to deal with negative emotions (chiefly unhappiness) is found in John 16:20–24. In this passage, Jesus addresses the unfairness of life, like when His disciples are harassed for doing the right thing. Jesus promises that their grief will be turned into joy. He acknowledges that there will be sorrow, but assures the believer that help will just as quickly arrive, comparing it with how the acute pain of a mother giving birth quickly gives way to joy when her child is born. Jesus knew that much of human misery has to do with painful emotions from the past, and He assures us that unpleasant past memories will be ultimately wiped away. While grief is sometimes necessary (verse 22), and pain can sometimes carry meaning, Jesus points us to the permanent joy that He will give His children upon His return, and that nobody can take away (verse 22).

Stewards of our Behaviour

Most behaviours come about as a result of thoughts and feelings, hence the importance

of thought management. Some behaviours will also lead to emotional and mental disturbances, thus acting as triggers for psychopathology. Let's think of addiction. Someone who is addicted to a substance loses self-control. This results in cravings, compulsion, guilt, etc. Repetition leads to greater tolerance for the substance, makes the addiction stronger, and causes serious problems to the individual, their loved ones, and society at large.

Many believe that they cannot be victims of addiction, since they never use alcohol or drugs. But there are also behavioural addictions, such as pornography, gambling, or internet games. Once "hooked," individuals experience almost identical patterns to that of chemical addictions. Even necessary things in life, such as certain food, work, money, shopping, or the internet, may become addictive if used excessively and obsessively.

Yes, mental health is an asset, just as physical health, talents, money, or possessions. All are entrusted to us to bring glory to God and service to others. We must understand how to develop them, cherish them, and bring them into the Lord's service, which is the service to our fellow men and women, just as Peter wrote: "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, NKJV).



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My Commitment

To establish one new healthy habit, in order to better serve the Lord with my mind.



Day 5

When You Pray for Souls, Believe

By Ramon Canals

Have you ever asked God to give you something you want, only to quickly dismiss what He gives you because you fail to recognise that the answer to your prayer is right in front of you? Have you ever prayed for something and then rejected it after God gave it to you? Well, I must confess that I have been there many times. A few years ago, I was visiting people in a community, intending to start Bible studies in preparation for an evangelistic meeting. I prayed to God to lead me to people in the community who were open to receiving the gospel. People whom God was already working on. People who were hungry for the Truth. I did not want to get into religious arguments with people. All I wanted, as a steward of the gospel, was to share Jesus with people who wanted to hear the gospel.

To my surprise, God answered my prayer precisely as I had asked. He sent me to the house of a lady with all the characteristics I prayed for, except she did not fit my stereotype. I did not recognise her as one who was seeking after God.

Unidentified Divine Encounters

As my friend and I visited the neighbourhood looking for people interested in studying the Bible, we came to a house that was slightly different from all the other houses. The house was shaped like a pyramid. The colour red was prominent in the house, including red curtains, doors, and windows. Hesitantly, I rang the doorbell. A tall, blue-eyed, elegant lady opened the door. We thought about turning around and leaving as soon as we saw her. Not because she was ugly, but because she was very beautiful. And in addition, she was dressed in clothes more appropriate for bed than the outside.

We stood at the door, stunned. Should we talk to this lady, or not? With a little fear, we told her that we were visiting the neighbourhood, giving out literature, and praying for people. Then she said, "Come in." I looked at my friend, and without exchanging words, we both understood we needed to leave this place as fast as possible. But she kept insisting, "Please, come in."

We hesitated. Later my friend and I exchanged thoughts and discovered we were both thinking the same thing: This is a prostitution house, this lady is a prostitute, and we'd better run for dear life. But the lady kept insisting for us to come in.

Finally, we decided to walk into the house, and without looking at her, we opened our Bibles and began to talk about Jesus. We spoke to her about how Jesus is so precious in our lives and how He saved us by giving us His life. We talked about how much God loves us and that He is coming soon to take us home. Then all of a sudden, she said, "Excuse me." She left the room and came back completely dressed a few minutes later. We never said a word about her clothes. All we talked about was Jesus. But the Holy Spirit was working in her heart. As we continued the Bible study, I noticed she began to cry. I did not know what was happening. Then she began to talk and told us that she did not know how to pray but had been asking God to send someone to teach her the Bible. I couldn't believe what she was saying. I was praying for God to take me to someone with whom He was already working, and He did. But because of my preconception, I did not see it.

Believing in God's Outcomes

God answered my prayers by sending me to this home. And at the same time, God was answering her prayers by sending me to teach her the Bible. However, I almost missed that opportunity because I was judging her for her looks on the outside. Betty (this beautiful lady) and her whole family gave their lives to the Lord and were some of the first people who got baptised during those evangelistic

meetings. Betty had a ten-year-old daughter who was baptised. Her name is Cindy. I saw Cindy a few weeks ago in St. Louis. She is now a 47-year-old woman with two kids of her own. She gave me a big hug and said, "Thank you for witnessing to my family. This is the best thing that has ever happened to us." My heart was touched. These are

the kind of stories that convince me that witnessing is highest form of stewardship because witnessing is about sharing Jesus, the Giver of life.

This experience taught me three important lessons: 1) When you pray, believe that God is sending you to the right place. Do not judge anyone based on what they look like on the outside. 2) When you pray, believe that God talks to people before you do. 3) When you pray for souls, believe that God will use you to witness to other people. We all learn the gospel from another Christian.

Pursuing God's Design

I didn't know what witnessing was until I experienced it myself and saw how it changed people's lives. To be a witness for Christ is the highest calling anyone can have. Whether you are a mechanic, nurse, engineer, doctor, pastor, or administrator, witnessing is your number one priority. Whether young or old, male or female, regardless of our cultural identity, you and I have been called to talk about what we have seen and experienced with God.

Here are five reasons why witnessing is so crucial:

1. Nothing brings more happiness to our hearts. Witnessing is about sharing Jesus with other people. It is about telling them what a precious Saviour we have in Jesus. There is joy in sharing in God's mission. Partnering with God in the salvation of souls is the single most exciting thing in the universe. "There is no greater bliss on this side of heaven than in winning souls to Christ."¹

2. We are providing an opportunity for salvation. When we share Jesus with others, we give them a chance for salvation. "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour,

When you pray for souls,
believe that God will use you
to witness to other people.

¹ Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1946), 333.

who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:3, 4, NKJV). We need to give people every opportunity to respond to the calling of the Holy Spirit. We need to make the most of every opportunity to witness about Jesus.

3. It brings joy to God's heart. Nothing brings more joy to God's heart than seeing people give their lives to Him. "Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (Luke 15:10, NKJV).

4. We become like Jesus. Jesus is a soul winner. He wants His disciples to be like Him. "Then He said to them, 'Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men'" (Matthew 4:19). Participating in the church's mission helps us develop a character like Jesus.

5. We are faithful to God's command. God expects every one of His disciples to be part of fulfilling the Great Commission. "'Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.' Amen" (Matthew 28:19, 20, NKJV).

When you pray for souls, believe. God always answers your prayers. Every Christian is born as a missionary. We are on this planet for one reason only: to bear witness to the amazing God of the universe.



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My Commitment

To dedicate regular time each week to share the good news through Bible studies, small groups, and other means, and to intercede for others.

"Not for Himself, but for others, He lived and thought and prayed. From hours spent with God He came forth morning by morning, to bring the light of heaven to men."

Ellen G. White, Prayer, p. 176



Day 6

Sabbath Keeping

By Hiskia & Ellen Missah

The seventh-day Sabbath is an important segment of time that we are called to manage. It is essential to revisit how to spend these sacred hours, as it has a repercussion on our being.

My Personal Experience

While writing this article, my (Hiskia) mind is wandering away, reminiscing the good times I had in my childhood with my parents, and the Sabbath keeping way, which was adopted to my family more than a half-century ago. I was so blessed to experience such wonderful times of how we prepared for the Sabbath to begin, welcoming and celebrating that special and blessed day.

Here's the Sabbath regulation in my childhood home: On Sabbath, there was absolutely no ironing, cleaning, or cooking. Before sundown on Fridays, everything was expected to be prepared, such as ironing the clothes we would wear for church, shining the shoes, and cooking the food for Sabbath. Then, when the sun almost set in the west, my father gathered all his children and family members in the living room, where we sat down, sang a few Sabbath songs, read the Bible, uttered memory verses, prayed, and ended with the Lord's Prayer, recited together. Right afterward, we formed a circle, held hands together, and wished each other a happy Sabbath. We said, "Happy

Sabbath, happy Sabbath, happy Sabbath." As the sun slipped beyond the horizon, a feeling of peace came over our hearts and home. That was my family's ritual for welcoming the Sabbath.

As a kid, I always liked and enjoyed the Sabbath because of these reasons: Firstly, we had no school, which meant no homework or quizzes. Secondly, I was free from doing my routine activities and house chores. Thirdly, I met my friends at church and had the opportunity to chitchat with them. And lastly, because of special meals. My mother always cooked delicious food and a specific menu—prepared only for Sabbath.

Sabbath became a happy day for us, and me in particular, a day we eagerly awaited. This awesome experience has stuck in my mind until today. In turn, I implemented the same routine and practice for my children, and they enjoyed it very much. Now, as they have their own families, they practice the same routine for their children and families. This is a legacy that I have left for my descendants to follow.

Sabbath Keeping in the Spirit of Prophecy

In the writings of Ellen White, we find instructions about the permanence of the Sabbath and practical advice about keeping the Sabbath.

- "God has given us the whole of six days in

which to do our work and has reserved only one to Himself. This should be a day of blessing to us—a day when we should lay aside all our secular matters and centre our thoughts upon God and heaven.”¹

- “But while we worship God, we are not to consider this a drudgery. The Sabbath of the Lord is to be made a blessing to us and to our children. They are to look upon the Sabbath as a day of delight, a day which God has sanctified; and they will so consider it if they are properly instructed. The parents may take their children outdoors, to view God in nature. They can be pointed to the blooming flowers and the opening buds, the lofty trees and beautiful spires of grass, and taught that God made all these in six days, and rested on the seventh day, and hallowed it. Thus the parents may bind up their lessons of instruction to their children, so that when these children look upon the things of nature, they will call to mind the great Creator of them all. Their thoughts will be carried up to nature’s God—back to the creation of our world, when the foundation of the Sabbath was laid, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. Such are the lessons to be impressed on the minds of our children.”²

Sabbath is not our time, but God’s time. We must keep the Sabbath faithfully and give its time to Him. Otherwise, when we trespass upon it, it is considered stealing God’s time.

Therefore, we shall keep the Sabbath, for it is holy; it is a sign that God is the Creator and we are His creation. We shall keep this in mind throughout our generations.

Some Benefits of Sabbath Keeping

1. Delight in the Lord. As Sabbath keepers, we know that God said we are to call this Holy day a delight. Isaiah 58:13, 14 says, “If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy

day of the LORD honourable, and shall honour Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words, Then you shall delight yourself in the LORD” (NKJV).

God has promised that we shall delight ourselves in the Lord on the Sabbath. Unfortunately, for some people, the Sabbath has become a burden, an unhappy day because of the many man-made restrictions that were included in the law of the Sabbath.³ Many of the 1,521 regulations associated to the Sabbath harms the beauty and enjoyment of the Sabbath and of Sabbath keeping.³ In this way, Satan is keeping away many from experiencing the Sabbath, depriving them of the joy that God has provided.

2. Source of Prosperity. The Sabbath commandment is accompanied by God’s promise of prosperity: “And I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the LORD has spoken” (Isaiah 58:14).

If we keep the Sabbath faithfully, God will cause us to ride upon the high places of the earth and feed us with Jacob’s heritage. In other words, if we observe and keep the Sabbath joyfully, God will bless us. He will raise us up to the “top” of the world, as recorded in Deuteronomy 28:13, “The LORD will make you the head, not the tail. If you pay attention to the commands of the LORD your God that I give you this day and carefully follow them, you will always be at the top, never at the bottom.” The nation that keeps and observes the Sabbath proves the truthfulness of Deuteronomy 28:13.

3. Enjoying creation. Nature is the second book that reveals God. Ellen White writes: “The things of nature are the Lord’s silent ministers, given to us to teach us spiritual truths. They speak to us of the love of God and declare the wisdom of the great Master Artist.”⁴ The Sabbath rest provides an excellent opportunity for families who live in a busy world, surrounded by man-made objects to

¹ Ellen G. White, *Letters and Manuscripts*, vol. 3 (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1876), 292.

² Ibid

³ John W. Ritenbaugh, “What the Bible Says About Relieving Burdens: Matthew 12:9–14,” accessed August 18, 2022, <https://www.bibletools.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/topical.show/RTD/cgg/ID/1052/Relieving-Burdens.htm>.

⁴ Ellen G. White, *Adventist Home* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1952), 146.



access the revelation of nature. We can appreciate the work of the Creator and how He provides for humanity. As such, the seventh day Sabbath provides a regular reminder of our position as God's stewards. Some Sabbath afternoon activities can reconnect us with God's creation. You can:

- Visit a park or a garden and have a Bible study there.
- Sit by a quiet beach, lake, or creek, and listen to the beautiful splashing of water.
- Take a hike in the mountains, breathe the fresh air deeply, and discover the wonder of nature.
- Go on a nature walk, taking a pair of binoculars to watch for birds.
- Lay a blanket out in the sunshine to get some needed vitamin D.

Observing and interacting with nature will increase our interest in keeping the Sabbath and gladly welcoming it every week. Let us make simple choices to make the Sabbath a joyful experience for us and our family, now, and throughout the coming year.



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My Commitment

To prepare for the Sabbath during the week, and to faithfully keep and enjoy the day of rest.



Day 7

Making Windows in Heaven

By Aniel Barbe

Recently, at a Sabbath lunch, we were enjoying our favourite dish, a good old theological discussion. After some time, the conversation moved toward the issue of rewards and blessings. Does God currently reward the faithful, or are God's rewards reserved for the future? What's the nature of God's reward: spiritual, material, or both? If there is a present reward, what's the purpose? Interestingly, various positions emerge among us. Christians are divided on the issue of God's reward. For some, it is all about obeying God to enjoy a larger, present blessing, while others reject the concept of a present reward. This situation led me to revisit Malachi 3:10-12, a passage regularly cited as God's reward for those who practice faithful tithing.

Overflow of Blessings

Malachi uses figurative language, "open for you the windows of heaven" (NKJV), to describe the outcome of returning a complete tithe to the Lord. Previously, Moses used the expression "the windows of heaven were opened" (Genesis 7:11, NKJV) to describe the heavy rain that occurred during the forty days of the Flood. Elsewhere, he uses an almost similar expression, "I will rain bread from heaven" (Exodus 16:4, NKJV), to refer to manna, the daily subsistence of Israel for forty years. "Open for you the windows of heaven" conveys the idea of divine initiative, abundance, and material things.

Malachi 3:10 (NKJV) provides further truth about the outcome for faithful tithers: "pour out for you such blessing." This teaching is in harmony with God's promise found in Deuteronomy 28. The introductory line informs about the recipients of the promise, those who "diligently obey the voice of

the LORD your God, [and] to observe carefully all His commandments” (verse 1, NKJV)). Later, the blessing is described: “The LORD will open to you His good treasure, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season, and to bless all the work of your hand” (verse 12, NKJV).

While God’s love and blessings precede tithing, it is scripturally sound to acknowledge that God adds abundant material blessings to those who are faithful tithers. Ellen White confirms this understanding: “If they had fully and freely acknowledged God’s requirements and met His claims, His blessing would have been manifest in increasing the productions of the earth. The harvests would have been greater. The wants of all would have been abundantly supplied. The more we give, the more we shall receive.”¹ The present and future reward of the faithful is well-established truth.

God’s abundant blessings does not come in uniform packages. They vary from one individual to another. Some won’t beg for bread (Psalm 37:25), while others will produce abundant wealth. Ellen White explains about this diverse reality: “Some will have a hundredfold in this life, and in the world to come life everlasting. But all will not receive their hundredfold in this life, because they cannot bear it.”² Let’s have confidence in God’s wisdom.

According to *The Message*, Luke 16:10–13 says, “If you’re not honest in small jobs, who will put you in charge of the store?” Faithfulness in tithing shows that we can handle more of God’s blessings.

Currently, we are trotting through uncharted territories. Many are facing new life circumstances for which they don’t have the experience and resources. In such situations, the temptation to pause tithing is usually high. Nevertheless, won’t it be wiser and more reassuring to keep the windows of heaven open over us?

God’s Protection Scheme

The next two verses, Malachi 3:11, 12, expand on verse 10. Malachi 3:11 states: “And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, so that he will not destroy

the fruit of your ground, nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field” (NKJV). Here, Malachi elaborates on God’s protective measures.

Life has taught us that it is not enough to be blessed, but to preserve and enjoy our blessings. The prophet Micah describes one consequence of unfaithfulness: “You shall sow, but not reap; you shall tread the olives, but not anoint yourselves with oil; and make sweet wine, but not drink wine” (Micah 6:15, NKJV). These are frustrating life scenarios. When the children of Israel would ascend to Jerusalem during the three pilgrim festivals, they would sing their deep aspiration: “Blessed is every one who fears the LORD, who walks in His ways. When you eat the labour of your hands, you shall be happy, and it shall be well with you” (Psalm 128:1, 2, NKJV). This happens when our God rebukes, literally cripples and paralyses, the devourer.

Jesus mentions the presence of a devourer and reminds us of His protective plan: “The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10, NKJV). The “they” in this verse refers to “his own sheep,” to those who “know his voice” and “follow him” (John 10:4, NKJV). He ensures protection and abundant life for those who acknowledge him as Owner. In the time of Malachi, the people failed to acknowledge God as Father and Master (Malachi 1:6), and as a result, their blessings were cursed (Malachi 2:2). In contrast, tithing is a statement of acknowledgment of God’s ownership over us and everything. As such, it permits Jesus to enrol us in His protection plan.

God’s protection is much needed for our unstable time: “God is our protection and our strength. He always helps in times of trouble. So we will not be afraid even if the earth shakes, or the mountains fall into the sea, even if the oceans roar and foam, or the mountains shake at the raging sea” (Psalm 46:1–3, NCV). In a world where the stock market is swinging, war is raging, COVID-19 and monkey pox are threatening, and the cost of living is skyrocketing, is it not best to place ourselves

¹ Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Stewardship* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1940), 90.

² Ibid, 232.

and everything we have under the care of the all-powerful God? By tithing, we enrol into God's protection plan.

More Blessings for a Purpose

We read in Malachi 3:12: "And all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a delightful land" (NKJV). This verse uses two expressions for the reaction of others to faithful tithers: "call you blessed" and "delightful land."

The expression "call you blessed" is applied to the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31. She is called blessed by her children and her husband (verse 28). These praises are not for her beauty or for what she has acquired, but for her actions, which were a blessing to them and others: her doing very well, the fruits of her hands, and her works.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, was also called blessed because, through her sacrificial actions, the world would be blessed (Luke 1:48). One is called blessed when one becomes a special blessing for others. This is the purpose of the additional abundant blessings.

Apostle Paul elaborates on this concept: "And God can give you more blessings than you need. Then you will always have plenty of everything—enough to give to every good work" (2 Cor. 9:8, NCV). For Paul, more blessings are for an altruistic purpose, more good work. The abundantly blessed believer does not live according to the standard of this age, but for a higher principle. Does not earn more to spend more on ourselves, but earn more to become a bigger blessing for others. Acquiring

more blessings is not the finality of faithful tithing, but of becoming a larger channel of blessing!

The expression "delightful land" talks about an increase in the witnessing capacity of God's children, of them becoming desirable. While enjoying abundant blessings, Israel would become appealing and desirable. Many would want to be like and be part of them. Israel could then more easily fulfil God's plan for her: "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed." And this would happen when "you have obeyed My voice" (Gen. 22:18, NKJV). The abundant reward of faithful tithing is not to satisfy our selfish desires, but to serve as a testimony to the goodness and faithfulness of God. When abundantly blessed, we have additional opportunities to point people to the Source of all blessings.

Ellen White says, "We must take God at His word, and in simplicity of faith walk out upon the promise, and give to the Lord His own."³ Faithful tithers are rewarded now and at the great day of God (Malachi 4:2, 3). As the Lord of hosts, Captain and Commander of the angelic armies, none of His promises fail to come true. However, tithing is not a bargaining transaction between humanity and God. It's not about returning to get more. As an unselfish spirit leads to faithful tithing, the same spirit would help us use our additional blessings to bless others and witness about the Provider of all blessings.



Aniel Barbe is associate director of the Stewardship Ministries Department at the General Conference and editor of the *Dynamic Steward* magazine.

³ Ibid, 90.

My Commitment

To faithfully return the Lord's tithe
(10% of my income or increase)



Day 8

Acceptable & Unacceptable Offerings

By Marcos F. Bomfim



There are plenty of indications in the Bible implying that the Lord evaluates, assesses, and rates our giving or its absence. The fact that He purposely sat opposite to the treasury (Mark 12:41) and that He rated the poor widow's offering (Mark 12:43) should tell us that even today, He is watching and assessing our giving patterns.

Another important truth is that some offerings are accepted and valued by Him, while others, irrespective of their amount, cannot be accepted and become even offensive to Him. What are some of the conditions for God to accept an offering?

1. When it is presented by a heart that is right with God. (Psalm 40:6–8; 51:16, 17; Isaiah 1:10–13; Hosea 6:6; Malachi 3:2–5; Matthew 9:13; Mark 12:33)

According to Malachi 3, God accepts those offerings that are brought “in righteousness” (verse 3), that is, by those who have allowed God to purify, to refine them (verses 2, 3) from sins such as sorcery, adultery, perjury, overreaching or oppressing

hirelings in their wages, and oppression of the vulnerable and foreigners (verse 5), to mention a few. Only then will “the offerings ... be acceptable to the LORD” (verse 4).

It becomes clear that the Lord evaluates the giver before the gift. The best and biggest offering will never be accepted if the one who brings it is not right with God. Thus, we need to bring a “heart offering” before we bring a “monetary offering.” We bring a “heart offering” when we regularly take time daily to allow the Holy Spirit to examine our thoughts and inclinations, comparing them with the Word of God. By confessing our sins and believing that Jesus’ death was sufficient to pay our debt, we receive the power to loathe ourselves because of our evil ways and deeds (Ezekiel 36:31), and then to receive a new heart, full of desire to do God’s will (Ezekiel 36:26, 27).

2. When it is brought by a heart that is right with men. (Matthew 5:23, 24; Hebrews 13:16)

Everyone who is right with God will strive to be right with other human beings. Those who bear a

contentious spirit or are oblivious to the feelings, rights, or needs of others show that their religion is false. Therefore, their offerings cannot be accepted by God.

For this reason, Jesus says that if you are bringing your offering to the church (God's storehouse) and "remember that your brother has something against you," stop giving your offering "and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Matthew 5:23, 24, NKJV). Have I done all I can to live peaceably with all men and women (Romans 12:18) and to help those in need around me? Without that sanctifying experience, our offerings cannot be accepted by God.

3. When it is presented by an obedient person. (1 Samuel 15:22; Psalm 40:6–8; Isaiah 66:2–4)

King Saul was eager to present offerings to the Lord, but only as a way to cover his wilful disobedience to the Lord's command. Instead of confessing his sin, he kept presenting excuses for doing what was against God's will (1 Samuel 15). Some people today may also do the same when they work during the Sabbath hours, promising to bring that day's wages as a kind of "compensation offering" for doing what is not right. But if a married man has an affair, will his wife accept a cake prepared by the other woman as compensation? Therefore, Samuel said to Saul, "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams" (1 Samuel 15:22, NKJV). God will never accept offerings as a replacement for loyalty to His commandments.

4. When the worshipper is seeking for heavenly, not an earthly, reward. (Matthew 6:1–4)

Some people may bring large offerings or make significant donations while compelled by less than

ideal motivations. Some, for example, want to be recognised as philanthropists or benefactors, others have an eye on a position on the church's committee, and still others may give out of love for the pastor. Because those earthly motivations generally expect a human recognition (a kind of reward), they cannot be accepted by God. Nevertheless, when I do not try to promote myself through my offerings, then what Jesus said may be accomplished in my life: "Your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you" (Matthew 6:4).

5. When it represents an appropriate proportion of the income. (Deuteronomy 16:17; Mark 12:41–44; 1 Corinthians 16:1, 2)

Jesus once said that the person who gave the lesser amount gave more than all who gave far larger amounts (Mark 12:41–44). Instead of lacking math

knowledge, the Creator of the universe indicated that His estimation of what we give is not based on the amount but on the proportion given. Six percent of the income given by the poorest person means the same as an offering of six percent of the income of the

wealthiest one, even though the amounts will differ greatly.

By choosing the proportional system to decide *when and how much* to offer, we testify that we do not give to earn merit. Instead, we give as an answer to His giving because He is always the first to give. He will never expect us to give anything if He has not given us something (2 Corinthians 8:11, 12).

By not purposing a fixed percentage of their income to give as an offering (2 Corinthians 9:7), people may be leaving it to their own deceitful heart (Jeremiah 17:9) to decide about *when and how much* to give. Conversely, by prayerfully choosing a proportion of the income to give as an offering, they put God in control of *when and how much* to give.

"It is not the greatness of the gift that makes the offering acceptable to God; it is the purpose of the heart, the spirit of gratitude and love that it expresses."

—Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 73



I give a fixed proportion of what He gives me, in answer to His giving. As we are partners in His business of saving souls, the more He blesses me financially, the bigger the amount that I will return to Him. And if He needs more to be invested in His business, He will give me more, for He knows that from every cent that He gives me, a fixed percentage will be invested back in forwarding His kingdom.

7. When it is given according to the specification. (Genesis 4:4, 5; Hebrews 11:4)

Cain and Abel's story shows us that God cannot accept offerings that are not brought according to His specifications. Cain resolved to do it his way, and God "did not respect Cain and his offering" (Genesis 4:5, NKJV). Abel pleased the LORD by following His guidance and bringing "the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering" (Genesis 4:4, NKJV).

Space will not allow us to explore all the specifications found in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy about acceptable offerings. But besides the items already covered above, we may add that regular offerings should also be brought to the Lord as first-fruits, respecting the *God First* principle (Matthew 6:33).

First-fruits (or firstborn) offerings were regularly brought to God by His children in remembrance that He is the Provider and Sustainer of life. They are only accepted because Jesus, the Lamb of God,

died as a ransom for our sins, opening the way for us to be accepted by the Father.

This kind of offering is "primarily triggered, not by good feelings, a specific need, a call, sympathy for a pastor or a religious leader, nor even a desire to provide for the temple or mission work. Instead, [it] should be triggered by God's act of sending some form of an increase. They are a means to worship God, in addition to the tithe (Malachi 3:8-10), whenever there is an addition of income."¹

Conclusion

Before every act of worship through offerings, we are invited by God to assess our hearts to see if there is still an unconfessed sin that may prevent our offering from being accepted. But we must also evaluate our relationship with God and with others, the motivation that is leading us to offer, and the regularity and quality of the offering. Is it the best that we can bring? Is it expressing gratitude and allegiance to Him?

Let us take advantage of worship through offerings to get even closer to the One who not only ransomed us through His blood, but also sustains us!



Marcos F. Bomfim is the director for the Stewardship Ministries Department of the General Conference and editor of the *GodFirst* newsletter.

¹ Marcos Faiock Bomfim, "God First: Biblical Narratives of Givers and Giving," Inverse Sabbath School Quarterly first quarter, lesson 2 (2023).

iPromise Cards

KO E 'OTUA KE MU'OMU'A

KO E TALA'OFA:



FAKAMAVAHE'I 'a e ngaahi fuofua momeniti 'o e 'aho kotoapē, ke feohi ai mo e 'Otua.

☐


Fakelele'i e ngaahi **VĀ FETAUHI'AKI**, 'aki 'a e **'OFA, FA'A FAKAMOLEMOLE** mo e **FEFAKALELEI'AKI**.

☐


FOKOTU'U ha fo'i 'ULUNGAANGA FAKATUPU MO'UI LELEI fo'ou 'e taha, ke tokoni kiate koe, ke ke to e ongona lelei ange ai, 'a e le'o 'o e 'Otua.

☐


Kolea 'a e **LAUMĀLIE MA'ON'ONI**, ke' Ne **TATAKI** koe kiate kinautolu 'oku' ke feohi faka'aho mo kinautolu, pea mo nau mateuteu foki ke fanongo ki ha'o vahevahe ange 'a ia, kuo fai 'e he 'Otua ma'au pea mo 'Ene **ME'A'OFA'AKI** 'a e **KELESI** ma'a kinautolu foki.

☐


TEUTEU atu, pea ke **FIEFIA** ma'u pe 'i he 'aho **SAPATE**.

☐


Faitotonu 'i hono **FAKAFOKI** 'a e **VAHE HONGOFULU** pe 10% 'a e 'Otua 'i ho'o pa'anga pe koloa hu mai kotoapē kuo ne **FUOFUA** foaki atu ma'au.

☐


TALA'OFA foki, ke foaki ha peseti pau 'o ho'o pa'anga hū mai, ko ho'o me'a'ofa tukupau ia.

☐

'I HE TOKONI 'A E 'OTUA: _____ 'AHO: _____

TONGAN TRANSLATION (FOR ADULTS)



POTUNGAUE TAUHI

God First SPD Promise Card Adult Tongan

PRIMERO DIOS

MI PACTO:



SEPARAR los primeros momentos de cada día para la comunión con el Señor mediante la **ORACIÓN**, el **ESTUDIO** de la Biblia, del Espíritu de Profecía y de la Lección de la Escuela Sabática, y a través del **CULTO FAMILIAR**.

☐


MEJORAR mis **RELACIONES**: creciendo en fidelidad, perdón y amor por principio

☐


FORMAR un nuevo **HÁBITO SALUDABLE**, para servir de mejor manera al Señor a través de mi cuerpo y mente: _____

☐


Ofrecer un día (o una noche) cada semana para **TRABAJAR** para Dios, compartiendo las buenas nuevas a otros a través de Estudios Bíblicos, Grupos Pequeños, etc. ("Mi talento, mi ministerio").

☐


GUARDAR EL SÁBADO, preparándome debidamente para el en el viernes, respetando sus límites y manteniendo pensamientos y actividades apropiados.

☐


DEVOLVER FIELMENTE EL DIEZMO al Señor (10% de mis ingresos).

☐


DEDICAR un porcentaje regular de mis ingresos (____%) como una ofrenda al Señor (pacto).

☐

DIOS MEDIANTE: _____ FECHA: _____

SPANISH TRANSLATION (FOR ADULTS)



MAYORDOMÍA CRISTIANA

God First SPD Promise Card Adult Spanish

GOD FASTAEM

MI PROMIS:



fo **STATIM FASTAEM** lo evri dei taem for tok wetem God lo **PREA**, stadim buka tabu, spirit blo profesi en sabat skul lesan insait **LOTU BLO FAMILI**.

☐


fo **IMPRUVIM RILESONSIP** blo mi fo mi kamap feitful, fogiving, en lav lo trufala wei.

☐


fo **STATIM WANFALA** niu Helti wei, for sevim **GOD** gudfala lo tingting blo mi.

☐


fo **OFARIM** wan dei (o ivining) evri wik lo **WOK** for **GOD** fo spredim Gud Nius lo narafala, fo stadim **BUKA TABU**, statim smol grup en samfala wei moa (TMI).

☐


fo **KIPIM GUD SABAT**, redi for hem lo Fraede, en kipim olketa taem blo hem lo strefala wei en wanem foduim.

☐


fo **FEITFUL RITENIM TAERI** (10%) long wanem mi risivim.

☐


fo **DEDIKETIM** olowe pasenteg (____%) long seleni mi tekem osem fri wil **OFARING** fo **GOD**.

☐

HELPIM MI GOD: _____ DET: _____

SOLOMON ISLANDS TRANSLATION (FOR ADULTS)



STEWARDSHIP MINISTRIES

God First SPD Promise Card Adult Solomon Islands

FAAMUAMUA LE ATUA

OU TE TAUTINO ATU:



TUUESEINA FAAPITOA taimi amata i aso uma ma te mafuta ai ma le Atua.

☐


Faaleleia atili le **MAFUTAGA** e ala i le **ALOFA, FAAMAGALO** ma le **LELEIGA**.

☐


FAUSIAINA se masaniga **FAALESOIFUA MALOLOINA** ina ia manino atili le faalogo i le siufofoga o le Atua.

☐


Valaaulia le **AGAGA PAIA** e **TAITAIINA** oe i aso uma, ia i latou o tatala la latou faalogo i mea ua faia e le Atua mo oe, ma le **MEAAOFA** a le Atua o le **ALOFA TUNOA** mo i latou.

☐


TAPENAPENA ma **OLIOLI** i le **SAPATI**.

☐


Faamaoni i le **TOE FAAFOI** o le **SEFULUAI** a le Atua e 10%, i soo se tamaoiga ou te maua na ia **MUAI** tuuina atu ia te oe.

☐


Ou te **TAUTINO ATU** se pasene e (____%) o le tamaoiga e te maua e fai ma au taulaga.

☐

I LE FESOASOANI MAI O LE ATUA: _____ ASO: _____

SAMOAN TRANSLATION (FOR ADULTS)



STEWARDSHIP MINISTRIES








God First SPD Promise Card Adult Samoan

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Share the card before and during the Stewardship Week of Revival.
<https://stewardship.adventistchurch.com/i-promise-commitment-cards/>



PRIMEIRO DEUS

MEU PACTO:

-  **SEPARAR** os primeiros momentos de cada dia para comunhão com o Senhor através da **ORAÇÃO**, do estudo da Bíblia, do Espírito de Profecia e da Lição da Escola Sabatina, e através do **CULTO FAMILIAR**. ☐
-  **MELHORAR** meus **RELACIONAMENTOS**: crescendo em fidelidade, perdão e amor por princípio. ☐
-  **ESTABELECE** um novo **HÁBITO SAUDÁVEL**, para melhor servir ao Senhor com minha mente: _____ ☐
-  **OFERECER** um dia (ou noite) cada semana para **TRABALHAR** para Deus, espalhando as boas novas a outros através de Estudos Bíblicos, Pequenos Grupos, etc. ("Meu Talento, Meu Ministério"). ☐
-  **GUARDAR** o **SÁBADO**, preparando-me devidamente para ele na sexta-feira, respeitando seus limites e mantendo pensamentos e atividades apropriados. ☐
-  **DEVOLVER FIELMENTE** o **DÍZIMO** ao Senhor (10% da minha renda). ☐
-  **DEDICAR** uma porcentagem regular de minha renda (____%) como oferta ao Senhor (Pacto). ☐

COM A AJUDA DE DEUS: _____ DATA: _____

PORTUGUESE TRANSLATION (FOR ADULTS)










MORDOMIA CRIST

God First SPD Promise Card Adult Portuguese

DIEU EN PREMIER

JE M'ENGAGE:

-  De **METTRE A PART** les premiers moments de chaque jour pour communier avec le Seigneur à travers la **PRIÈRE**, l'**ÉTUDE** de la Bible, l'Esprit de Prophétie et la leçon de l'école du Sabbat, et lors du **CULTE DE FAMILLE**. ☐
-  **D'AMÉLIORER** mes **RELATIONS**: en croissant en fidélité, pardon et en aimant par principe. ☐
-  **D'ÉTABLIR** une nouvelle **HABITUDE SAINTE**, de servir mieux le Seigneur avec mon esprit: _____ ☐
-  **D'OFFRIR** un jour (ou une soirée) chaque semaine pour **TRAVAILLER** pour Dieu, en partageant la bonne nouvelle aux autres à travers des Études de la Bible, des petits groupes, etc. (ITM). ☐
-  **D'OBSERVER** le **SABBAT**, en m'y préparant comme il le convient le vendredi, respectant ses limites, avec des pensées et activités appropriées. ☐
-  De **RENDRE FIDÈLEMENT** la **DIME** du Seigneur (10% de mes revenus). ☐
-  De **CONSACRER** un pourcentage régulier (____%) de mes revenus comme une **OFFRANDE VOLONTAIRE** au Seigneur. ☐

AVEC L'AIDE DE DIEU: _____ DATE: _____

FRENCH TRANSLATION (FOR ADULTS)








GESTION CHRÉTIENNE DE LA VIE

God First SPD Promise Card Adult French

GOD FIRST

MI POMIS OLSEM:

-  Taim mi kirap long moning olgeta dei, em bai mi lotu long God insait long **PREA** na **BAIBEL** stadi. ☐
-  Strongim pasin bilong prenim ol pipol wantaim pasin bilong **LAIKIM**, **LUSIM RONG** bilong narapela na **TOK SORI**. ☐
-  Statim wanpela **NIUPLA** gutpla **PASIN** bai ken halivim mi long harim singaut bilong God klia long laip bilong mi. ☐
-  Bai mi askim **HOLI SPIRIT** long skulim mi wantaim ol narapela long winim ol pipol i kam long Jisas. ☐
-  Bai mi **REDI** gut na mekim **SABAT** em i wanpela dei bilong **AMAMAS** na **LOTU** long God. ☐
-  Bai mi **FEITFUL** long givim **TENTEN** i go bek long God bikos, em i bilong **GOD PAPA** yet. ☐
-  Bai mi tok **PROMIS** long putim wanpela moni o ol samting mak bilong em olsem moni bai mi giving olsem **OFFERING**. ☐

GOD HALIVIM MI: _____ DEIT: _____

PAPUA NEW GUINEA TOK PISIN TRANSLATION (FOR ADULTS)










STEWADSHIP DEPATMEN

God First SPD Promise Card Adult Papua New Guinea

GOD FIRST

I PROMISE:

-  to **SET APART** the first moments of each day to spend time with God. ☐
-  to improve **RELATIONSHIPS** through **LOVE**, **FORGIVENESS** and **RECONCILIATION**. ☐
-  to **ESTABLISH** one new **HEALTHY HABIT** in order to hear God's voice more clearly. ☐
-  to ask the **HOLY SPIRIT** to **GUIDE** me to those in my daily life who are open to hearing what God has done for us and God's **GIFT** of **GRACE** for them. ☐
-  to **PREPARE** for and **ENJOY** the **SABBATH**. ☐
-  to faithfully **RETURN** God's **TITHES** which is 10% of whatever income He **FIRST** gives to me. ☐
-  **PROMISE** a percentage (____%) of my income as regular offering. ☐

WITH GOD'S HELP: _____ DATE: _____

PAPUA NEW GUINEA ENGLISH TRANSLATION (FOR ADULTS)










STEWARDSHIP MINISTRIES

God First SPD Promise Card Adult Papua New Guinea English

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<https://stewardship.adventistchurch.com/i-promise-commitment-cards/>

NA KALOU ME LIU

NOQU YALAYALA:

-  **VAKATIKITIKITAKA** nai matai ni vica na miniti ena veisiga mo wasea vata kei na Kalou. ☐
-  Vakavinakata na **VEIWEKANI** ena bula ni **LOLOMA**, **VEIVOSOTI**, kei na **VEIVAKADUAVATATAKI**. ☐
-  **VAKAYAVUTAKA** e dua nai **VAKARAU** ni **BULA** e **VINAKA** mo rawa ni o rogoca vinaka kina na domo ni Kalou. ☐
-  Kerea na **YALO TABU** me **TUBERI** iko ena veisiga vei ira era tu vakarau mera rogoca na veika sa cakava na Kalou vei iko, kei na nona i **SOLISOLI** ni **LOLOMA SAVU** na Kalou vei ira. ☐
-  **VAKAVAKARAU** vinaka ka **MARAUTAKA** na **SIGA NI VAKACECEGU**. ☐
-  Yalodina ena **VAKASUKAI** ni nona i **KATINI** na Kalou e 10% mai na ka kece o rawata ka soli **TAUMADA** vei iko. ☐
-  **YALATAKA** e vica na pasede (___%) mai na ka o rawata me nomu i solisoli tudei. ☐

ENA NONA VEIVUKE NA KALOU: _____ TIKI NI SIGA: _____





FUJIAN TRANSLATION (FOR ADULTS)

 STEWARDSHIP MINISTRIES

God First SPD Promise Card Adult Fijian

PARMESHWAAR PAHALE

MEERA VAADHA:

-  Har din ke shruaat mein pahala Samay main **ALAG THERAUNGA** Ishwar ke saath. ☐
-  Apne **RISHTON** ko sudharunga **PREM**, **MAAFI**, aur **SULAH** ke duwara. ☐
-  Ek nayi **SWASTHMAYE** aadat **STHAAPIT KARO** taaki Prabhu ka awaaz achi tarah se sunaayi de. ☐
-  **PAVITRA ATMA** ki maang karo margdarshan ke liye ki aap apne dainik jiwan un logon ko bata sako jo sunne ke liye taiyaar hai, ki prabhu tere liye kya kiya aur parmeshwar ke **ANUGRAH KA UPHAAR** unke liye hai. ☐
-  **VISHRAAM DIN** ki **TAYAARI** kare aur uska **ANNAND** LE. ☐
-  Pure imandaari se pachele **LAUTAAUNGA**, prabhu ke **DUSWA HISSA** apne andani mei se. ☐
-  **VAADHA** hai ki apne kamai se ek pratishath (___%) hissa chanda ki roop mein dunga. ☐

PARMESHWAR KE MADATH SE _____ TARIO _____

FUJIAN HINDI TRANSLATION (FOR ADULTS)

 STEWARDSHIP MINISTRIES

God First SPD Promise Card Adult Fijian Hindi

परमेश्वर पहले

मैं वादा (प्रतिज्ञा) करता हूँ:

-  कि हर दिन के शुरूआत में एक **पहला समय** होगा ईश्वर से **प्रार्थना** के द्वारा बातें करेंगे, धर्मशास्त्र पढ़ेंगे, आत्मा की भविष्यवाणी का पुस्तक पढ़ेंगे और सन्त स्कूल पाठ पढ़ेंगे और परिवार के साथ ईश्वर की स्तुति में भाग लेंगे। ☐
-  कि अपने रिश्तों को **सुधारेंगे**: विश्वास में आगे बढ़ेंगे, क्षमाशील होंगे और सच्चाई से प्रिय करेंगे। ☐
-  कि एक नई **स्वास्थ्य** आदत **स्थापित** करेंगा ताकि मेरे मन से यहोवा की बेहतर सेवा करूँ। ☐
-  कि हर रोज़नाह में एक दिन या एक शाम, परमेश्वर के काम करूँ, उसका सुसमाचार लोगों तक पहुँचा सकूँ इस माध्यम से, बाइबिल के वचन को सिखाना, छोटे दल में या और किसी तरह से - (हर लोग मिल कर - TMI) ☐
-  कि सन्त का पालन करूँगा, शुकवार के दिन उसकी तैयारी करूँगा, उसकी सीमा में रहे, सही विचारों और सही कार्य को ध्यान में रखते हुए। ☐
-  कि पूरे ईमानदारी से प्रभु का दशमांश **लौटाऊँगा** (मेरे आमदनी का 10%) ☐
-  कि प्रभु को **समर्पित** (पूरे मन से) अपने आमदनी से हमेशा एक नियमित प्रतिशत (.... %) जो स्वतंत्र इच्छा का अपनी भेंट होगा। ☐

परमेश्वर के मदद से: _____ तारीख: _____

ENGLISH TRANSLATION (FOR ADULTS)

 भण्डारण की सेवाकाई नॉर्टन इण्डिया यूनिन

God First SPD Promise Card Adult Fijian Hindi Devanagari

GOD FIRST

I PROMISE:

-  to **SET APART** the first moments of each day to spend time with God. ☐
-  to improve **RELATIONSHIPS** through **LOVE**, **FORGIVENESS** and **RECONCILIATION**. ☐
-  to **ESTABLISH** one new **HEALTHY HABIT** in order to hear God's voice more clearly. ☐
-  to ask the **HOLY SPIRIT** to **GUIDE** me to those in my daily life who are open to hearing what God has done for us and God's **GIFT** of **GRACE** for them. ☐
-  to **PREPARE** for and **ENJOY** the **SABBATH**. ☐
-  to faithfully **RETURN** God's **TITHE** which is 10% of whatever income He **FIRST** gives to me. ☐
-  **PROMISE** a percentage (___%) of my income as regular offering. ☐

WITH GOD'S HELP: _____ DATE: _____

ENGLISH TRANSLATION (FOR ADULTS)

 STEWARDSHIP MINISTRIES

God First SPD Promise Card Adult English

Download and print your iPromise Commitment card now.

Share the card before and during the Stewardship Week of Revival.

<https://stewardship.adventistchurch.com/i-promise-commitment-cards/>**GOD FESTAEM****MI PROMES:**Blong mi **SETEM ASAED** evri fes momen long evri dei blong mi toktok wetem Master Jisas Kraest tru long **PREA**, Bibol **STADI**, Spirit blong Profesi, Sabat Skul Lesen mo long **FAMILI WOSIP**.☐Blong **IMPRUVIM RILESENSIP** blong me: gro long feiffulness, fokifnes mo soem lav blong God olsem wan prinsipol o fasin blong laef blong me oltaem.☐Blong **STATEM** wan nui **HELT HABIT**, blong sevem God beta wetem hat mo maen blong mi: _____☐Blong **KIVIM** wan dei (o evening) long evri wik blong **WOK** blong God, serem gud nius blong hem tru long Baebol Stadi, ol smol smol grup mo ol narafala wei (TMI).☐Blong **KIPIM SABAT**, prepea gud long Fraedei, save mo kipim gud wanem blong mekem or no mekem, kipim raetfala tingting mo ol sabat aktifiti oltaem.☐Blong mi **FEITFUL** blong **KIVIM I KO BAK** long God **TAEIT** blong hem (10% long inkam blong me).☐Blong mi **DEDIKETEM** wan rekula pesent (____%) blong inkam blong me olsem wan frii will **OFFERING** ko bak long God.☐

WETEM HELP BLONG GOD: _____ DATE: _____

BISLAMA TRANSLATION (FOR ADULTS)

**STEWARDSHIP MINISTRIES**

God First SPD Promise Card Adult Bislama

FAAMUAMUA LE ATUA**OU TE TAUTINO ATU:****FAALU SE TAIMI** e talanoa ai ia lesu pe a ou ala i faeao uma.☐Valaau ia lesu e fesoasoani mai ia fe au ia ou **FAAMAGALO** ma **ALOFA** i isi ona e mafai ona avea o se mea faigata.☐Filifili se **MASANIGA FAALESOFUA MALOLOINA** ina ia mafai ona ou faalogo i le siufofoga o le Atua.☐**TAU** atu i au uo uma ma aiga lesu.☐Faafau ese lava le **SAPATI** e ala i lau tapenaga.☐Faamaoni e toe faafai le sefulua'i a le Atua e (10%) i soo se tamaoaiga ou te maua na ia **MUAI** fuuina mai ia fe au.☐Ou te **TAUTINO ATU** se pasene e (____%) o le tamaoaiga ou te maua e fai ma a'u faulaga i aso uma.☐

I LE FESOASOANI MAI O LE ATUA: _____ ASO: _____

SAMOAN TRANSLATION (FOR KIDS)

**STEWARDSHIP MINISTRIES**

God First SPD Promise Card Kids Samoan

PARMESHWAAR PAHALE**MEERA VAADA:**Roz subha jab main jagu sab se pahale Yesu se bafe karoon aur unke saath **SAMAY BITAON**.☐Yesu se maang karoon ki mujhe madad kare, main **CHAMA** kar saku aur ek doosare se **PREM** karoon kyunki ye kathin hote hai.☐**SVAASTHAMAY AADATON** ko chunoon taaki main Ishwaar ke aavaaj sun sakoon !☐Har ek dost aur parivaar ko Yesu ke Vishay mein **BATAON**.☐Hamesha taiyaar rahoon **VISHRAAMADIN** ko aur Khaas banaane ke liye.☐Jo kuch aamadaneer Prabhu mujhe **PAHALE** deta hai, main eemaanadaaree se **DASAVAN HISSA** use **LAUTAU**, jo 10% hai.☐**YEH VAADA** hai, mere aamadaneer ka Pratishat(____%), hamesha ka bhenf hoga!☐

PRABHU KE MAADUTH SAATH _____ TAAREEKH _____

FUJIAN HINDI TRANSLATION (FOR KIDS)

**STEWARDSHIP MINISTRIES**

God First SPD Promise Card Kids Fijian Hindi

परमेश्वर पहले**मैं वादा (प्रतिज्ञा) करता हूँ:**

कि रोज़ सुबह जब मैं जागूँ तो सब से पहले यीशु से बात करने में समय बिताएँ।

☐

कि यीशु से माँग करूँ की मुझे मदद करे, मैं छमा कर सकूँ और एक दूसरे प्यार करूँ क्योंकि ये वास्तव में कठिन हो सकता है।

☐

कि स्वास्थ्य आदतों को चूँ ताकि मैं ईश्वर के आवाज सुन सकूँ।

☐

कि सभी दोस्तों और परिवार को यीशु के बारे में बताएँ।

☐

कि हमेशा तैयार होकर सब को और भी खास बनाएँ।

☐

कि जो कुछ आमदनी ईश्वर मुझे पहले देता है, मैं ईमानदारी से प्रभु का दशमांश लौटाएँ, जो 10% है।

☐

कि ये वादा है, मेरे आमदनी का (%) प्रतिशत, हमेशा का भेंट होगा।

☐

परमेश्वर के मदद से: _____ तारीख: _____

FUJIAN HINDI TRANSLATION (FOR KIDS)

**भण्डारण की सेवकाई नॉर्डन इण्डिया यूनिन**

God First SPD Promise Card Kids Fijian Hindi Devanagari

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GOD FIRST

I PROMISE:

to **MEET GOD** in **PRAYER** and **READ** His **WORD** first thing, when I come out of my bed every morning.

☐

to invite Jesus to help me **FORGIVE** and **LOVE** others because without Him I cannot. It is really hard.

☐

to choose **HEALTHY HABITS** so I can listen to God's voice clearly.

☐

I will **TELL** all my friends and family about Jesus.

☐

I want to make **SABBATH** extra special by preparing well and getting ready.

☐

to faithfully **RETURN** God's **TITHES** which is 10% of whatever income He **FIRST** gives to me.

☐

I **PROMISE** a percentage (____%) of my income as a regular offering.

☐

WITH GOD'S HELP: _____
DATE: _____

PAPUA NEW GUINEA ENGLISH TRANSLATION (FOR KIDS)

STEWARDSHIP MINISTRIES

God First SPD Promise Card Kids Papua New Guinea English

KO E 'OTUA KE MU'OMU'A

KO E TALA'OFA:

FAKAMOLEKI HA TAIMI ke talanoa kia Sisu 'i ho'o fuofua 'ā hake 'i he 'aho kotoapē.

☐

Kole ki he 'Otua ke tokoni'i au keu **FAKAMOLEMOLE** mo 'OFA ki he ni'ihi kehe koe'uhi pē he 'oku ngali faingata'a.

☐

Fili ha **TO'ONGA MO'UI LELEI** keu lava 'o fanongo ki he le'o 'o e 'Otua.

☐

TALA ki he ngaahi maheni mo e fāmili fekau'aki mo Sisu.

☐

Ngaohi e **SAPATE** ke to e mahulu ange 'ene mavahe 'aki ha'o teuteu ki ai.

☐

Faitotonu 'i he **FAKAFOKI** 'a e **VAHE HONGOFULU** ki he 'Otua 'a ia ko e 10% 'i he koloa mo e pa'anga hū mai 'oku ke ma'u mei he me'a kuo ne foaki mai kiafe koe.

☐

TALA'OFA ha peseti (____%) 'o e pa'anga 'oku ke ma'u ko ho'o me'a'ofa fu'upau.

☐

'I HE TOKONI 'A E 'OTUA: _____
'AHO: _____

TONGAN TRANSLATION (FOR KIDS)

STEWARDSHIP MINISTRIES

God First SPD Promise Card Kids Tongan

DIEU EN PREMIER

JE PROMETS:

de **PASSER DU TEMPS** pour parler à Jésus a mon réveil chaque jours.

☐

de demander à Jésus de m'aider à **PARDONNER** et à **AIMER** mon prochain, car cela peut-être très difficile.

☐

de choisir des **HABITUDES SAINES** pour pouvoir écouter clairement la voix de Dieu.

☐

de **PARLER** de Jésus à tous mes amis et ma famille.

☐

de faire du **SABBAT** un jour très spécial en me préparant comme il le convient.

☐

de **RENDRE** fidèlement la **DÎME** de Dieu, qui représente 10 % de tout revenu qu'il me donne en **PREMIER**.

☐

de **CONSACRER** un pourcentage (____%) de mes revenus comme une offrande régulière au Seigneur.

☐

AVEC L'AIDE DE DIEU : _____
DATE : _____

FRENCH TRANSLATION (FOR KIDS)

GESTION CHRÉTIENNE DE LA VIE

God First SPD Promise Card Kids French

NA KALOU ME LIU

NOQU YALAYALA:

SOLIA NA GAUNA ni veitalanoa kei Jisu me matai ni ka niu yadra mai ena veisiga.

☐

Kerei Jisu me vukei au meu **VOSOTI** ira ka **LOMANI** ira na tani baleta e sega ni dau rawarawa.

☐

Digitaka nai **VAKARAU** ni **BULA** e **VINAKA** meu rawa ni rogoca vinaka kina na domo ni Kalou.

☐

WASEI Jisu vei ira na noqu icaba kei na noqu mafavuvale.

☐

Okata na **SIGA NI VAKACECEGU** me uasivi duaqua meu vakarautaki au kina vakavinaka.

☐

Yalo dina meu **VAKASUKA** nona i **KATINI** na Kalou e 10% mai na ka kece au rawata ka solia **TAUMADA** vei au.

☐

YALATAKA e vica na pasede (____%) mai na ka au rawata me noqu i solisoli tudei.

☐

ENA NONA VEIVUKE NA KALOU: _____
TIKI NI SIGA: _____

FUJIAN TRANSLATION (FOR KIDS)

STEWARDSHIP MINISTRIES

God First SPD Promise Card Kids Fijian

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GOD FIRST I PROMISE:

	To YARN with Jesus every day.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	To show FORGIVENESS and LOVE like Jesus did for me.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	To make HEALTHY choices so I can live for Jesus.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	To SHARE stories about Jesus with my family, friends and community.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	To make SABBATH a special day.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	To be faithful in giving my TITHES and OFFERINGS .	<input type="checkbox"/>
	To SHOW GOD'S LOVE by serving and helping others.	<input type="checkbox"/>

WITH GOD'S HELP: _____ DATE: _____

ATSIM VERSION (FOR KIDS)

STEWARDSHIP MINISTRIES

God First SPD Promise Card Kids ATSIM

GOD FIRST I PROMISE:

	to SPEND TIME talking to Jesus when I first wake up every day.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	to ask Jesus to help me FORGIVE and LOVE others because it can be really hard.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	to choose HEALTHY HABITS so I can listen to God's voice.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	to TELL all my friends and family about Jesus.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	to make SABBATH extra special by getting ready.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	to faithfully RETURN God's TITHE which is 10% of whatever income He FIRST gives me.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	PROMISE a percentage (____%) of my income as regular offering.	<input type="checkbox"/>

WITH GOD'S HELP: _____ DATE: _____

ENGLISH TRANSLATION (FOR KIDS)

STEWARDSHIP MINISTRIES

God First SPD Promise Card Kids English

GOD FESTAEM MI PROMES:

	SPENDEM TAE m blo toktok wetem Jisas taem mi kerap everi dei.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Askem Jisas blo helpem me blo FOGIVIM mo LAVEM olgeta from I had tumas.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Jusum ol GUDFALA FASIN blo mi save lisen lo vois blo Papa God.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	TALEM lo ol frems mo family abaot Jisas.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Mekem SABBATH priperesen hemi extra spesel.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Bae mi RITENEM TITHE we hemi 10% LONG wanem inkam we Papa God i givim long mi.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Mi PROMES se bae mi givim (____%) blo inkam blo mi olsem offering.	<input type="checkbox"/>

WETEM HELP BLO PAPA GOD: _____ DATE: _____

BISLAMA TRANSLATION (FOR KIDS)

STEWARDSHIP MINISTRIES

God First SPD Promise Card Kids Bislama

GRATEFUL LIVING

ALL RESOURCES HERE

God invites us to live gratefully by being faithful stewards of His blessings and enjoying all He gives us. It's a beautiful, whole-of-life existence.

THE 8 PILLARS OF GRATEFUL LIVING

- **Time:** dedicating time every day to God & His mission
- **Talents:** using my God-given abilities to serve Him
- **Testimony:** sharing what God is doing in my life
- **Temple:** caring for my mind & body for God's service
- **Treasure:** faithfulness with God's tithe, offerings & assets
- **Territory:** caring for my home, land & the environment
- **Tribes:** caring for my personal, church & global family
- **Truth:** faithfully protecting & sharing God's Word

"Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." 1 Corinthians 10:31

You're invited to a Christ-centred, rewarding and abundant life!

To run a Grateful Living series, simply download the PowerPoints, children's songs, videos and more at <https://stewardship.adventistchurch.com/grateful-living>

Seventh-day Adventist Church *South Pacific*

God First SPD Grateful Living English

