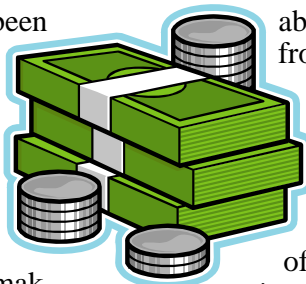


preachers. . . . (but) It's not a new thing, either. These material moguls have been around for a long time." (Ibid, pp. 47, 48) Paul spoke of them in 2 Corinthians 2:17. The emphasis in the Bible is on God making provisions for all of our needs and upon our responding to the law of the universe – that of giving.

Then, "If there are those who give in order to get rich, there are those at the other extreme who will not give because they feel that if they give, they won't have enough. . . . But for those who invest what they are given in worthwhile kingdom causes and in those who have need, God will find a way to give it back to them. As they keep giving it away, God will keep giving it back. This is the secret to abundant and meaningful living." (McSwain, Ibid, pp. 75, 83).

*The issue is that among some Adventists there may be some misunderstandings ("myths")*



*that need to be cleared up.* As McSwain says, these "Myths about giving can prevent you from experiencing the life I'm describing". (Ibid, p. 45)

Dr. Bill Bright, in his book *The Joy of Dynamic Giving*, places the challenge of experiencing the joy of giving in these words: "I would like to help Christians understand the biblical basis for stewardship and help bring a balance to the practice of giving. I want Christians to see how they can experience the abundant life assured by God's promised blessings if we follow those principles for giving. Finally, I want to encourage Christians to help fulfill the Great Commission by investing strategically and generously in the expansion of the kingdom of God." (p. 14)



Then, as we experience the real joy of giving in our lives, it will become a natural thing for us to share this same experience with our families, with other church members, and with friends.

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# the Stewpot

A potpourri of practical ideas to help you become a better steward

July 2008  
Volume 13, Issue #7

## The Fight Against Character Theft!

by A. G. Kromminga, D.Min.

The brochure from the Federal Trade Commission was subtitled, "Fighting Back Against Identity Theft" and indicated that all postal customers should take certain positive steps to keep ID thieves from stealing their ID and ultimately their worldly goods.

### The Challenge Within the Church

Yet there is another type of theft going on in the church that many members seem unaware of that is stealing a positive, joyous experience and character from them. What is it, you ask? Perhaps Stephen B. McSwain in his book, *The Giving Myths*, captured the answer in these words:

"One of the paradoxical things Jesus said – and there are many – pertains to giving: 'If you try to keep your life for yourself, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for me, you will find true life'. (Matt 16:25).

"This is just the opposite of what our culture teaches. Advertisers lure us into believing what could be described as the myth of 'getting' – a cultural myth that happiness, security, and

". . . the myth of 'getting' – a cultural myth that happiness, security, and contentment are found in the sum total of your material assets and personal accomplishments." (Stephen B. McSwain)

Stewardship is a total lifestyle. It involves our health, time, talents, environment, relationships, spirituality and finances.

contentment are found in the sum total of your material assets and personal accomplishments.” (p.12)

McSwain goes on to say that the experience of giving ourselves to Jesus is the giving of our time, body temple, talents, and material holdings back to Jesus in tithes and offerings. This involves a total life commitment and often is inhibited by “ego” or self, or even by some “myths” about giving. But what does the Bible say about giving?

Perhaps we need to explore *what* the Bible says about giving so that we can better relate to Jesus in our personal lives. Following are some positive steps that may be taken to help our personal experience.

### Make Giving a Personal, Heart Experience

To the Corinthians Paul wrote, “I know your eagerness to help, and I have been boasting about it to the Macedonians . . . This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God’s people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God.” 2 Cor. 9:2,12 NIV.

Ed Reid put it this way, “God doesn’t need the money! He wants our hearts. . . . Cheerful offerings are a response of love,

not a demand or an expectation. . . . May I suggest two solid reasons for cheerful giving? They are our response to the great love



of God and the thrill of seeing the work of God go forward.” (“Have You Got an Attitude?” <http://www.adventist-stewardship.org/>) “The life you’ve always wanted will be found in

one way only – in giving.” (McSwain, Ibid, p. 23) This is the experience that the Corinthians had found, and it can be ours, too!

“If the majority of the religious leaders today were experiencing the blessed life in giving, their churches would be observing in them a thorough transformation of their own characters, preaching and lifestyle. Many would enthusiastically follow their example.” (McSwain, Ibid, p. 31)

### Discover What This Heart Experience Involves

In his book, *Generous Giving*, Ron Blue says, “To prepare yourself for generous giving, you need to find out what God says about money.” (p.56) In other words, *we need to learn, to study what God’s Word says about money and giving*. This can be achieved through many ways –

personal study, pastoral sermons, seminars, printed literature, etc.

Blue goes on to point out that money is a tool to be used the way God wants us to, a test – financially, practically, and spiritually, and a testimony as to what we believe about God and His Word. (Ibid. pp. 57-59) The proper place and use of money in our lives can be a blessing to us personally as we learn to budget money for our personal use as well as for gifts to advance God’s cause.

There are many good books to read. Some suggestions are:

- *It’s Your Money! Isn’t it?* by G. Edward Reid
- *The Treasure Principle* by Randy Alcorn
- *Cents & Sensibility* by Bethany & Scott Palmer
- *Free and Clear* by Howard Dayton
- *The 33 Laws of Stewardship* by Dave Sutherland & Kirk Nowery

### Dispel Some of the “Myths” About Giving

There are many misunderstandings about what scripture says about money, its possession, use, and the benefits of giving liberally to God. McSwain, in his book *The Giving Myths*, deals with what he calls seven myths of giving. They are:

1. Give and you’ll Get Rich
2. I Can’t Afford to Give
3. Equal and Fair Share Giving is Enough
4. The Standard of Giving is Tithe
5. Get Them Involved and They Will Give
6. Your Charity is Your Private Matter
7. Test God Through Your Giving

McSwain speaks of the “Give and You’ll Get Rich” myth as the “most insidious of all myths about giving” and it is “primarily promoted by a certain strain of Christian and television

“But for those who invest what they are given in worthwhile kingdom causes and in those who have need, God will find a way to give it back to them. . . . This is the secret to abundant and meaningful living.” (Stephen B. McSwain)