



ILLINOIS Focus



Ron Aguilera, President

STEWARDSHIP EDITORIAL



The rich young man in Matthew 19 had a problem with money. His self-worth was derived from the labels on his clothing and the balance of his investment accounts. Most today, would not describe him as a bad man. Maybe he was president of his local investment or bank club, or a leader in his church youth group. Clearly, he was not a gang member, drug dealer, or sex addict. He was just a nice young man with an overactive credit card.

But Jesus had some troubling words for the young man who "went away sad" because as Matthew states, "he had great wealth." Interestingly, Jesus did not chase after him to soften what he had said, to suggest he just tithe what he could. He let the young man go, forcing him to choose between his money and his God. Jesus then turned to his disciples with one of scriptures most difficult teachings: "It will be harder for a rich person to enter heaven than for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle." Matthew 19:24

Martin Luther wrote, "There are three conversions necessary to follow Christ: the conversion of the heart, the mind, and the pocketbook." For

people in today's money-obsessed culture, it is the third conversion—the conversion of the pocketbook—that is most difficult. Maybe that is why so many pastors and churches today avoid speaking on the subject of being faithful to God in the returning of tithe and giving of offerings. You might find this hard to believe, but I recently had a pastor tell me, "I don't preach on

athlete who was insulted because his team offered him only 30 million dollars a year to play baseball. Jesus says, "You don't need money to be somebody. It is not what makes you who you are. Follow me and I will show you what you are really worth."

I remember a teacher I had in school. One day, she brought a pan

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money. If I did, it would turn people off."

Jesus was not afraid to take on that risk. He spoke about money often, and it was not advice on how to invest in the stock market or save more. Instead, He reminded us that "you can't serve God and money too!" (Luke 16:13) And He observed that "where your treasure is, that is where you will find your heart." (Matthew 6:21) I worry about young people growing up in a world in which success and self-worth are calculated strictly in terms of the bottom line. Recently, the news reported on an

of brownies to her class. While the brownies sat tantalizingly on her desk, she gave each student a piece of paper labeled with an expense; "House payment," "Electricity," "Groceries," and so on. Mine had "Car payment" written on it. Then, she picked up the tray of brownies and began naming the expenses she had written on the

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When one hears the term “steward” it solicits a variety of different interpretations. The more literal translation from the Hebrew is “Man over the house,” or “overseer.” Eliezer was the appointed heir and steward over Abram’s household prior to God’s promise to increase his offspring (Genesis 15:2). Jacob seemed to be Laban’s steward placed in charge of flocks and herds (Genesis 28-29). God’s covenant promise and blessings passed down from Abraham and Isaac resulted in Jacobs work (as steward) and family being “fruitful” in every way. Joseph was another model steward placed in charge of Potiphar’s household and ultimately his faithfulness inspired Pharaoh to place him in charge of the affairs of his kingdom as his chief minister. The fruitfulness of Joseph was prominent with all of his endeavors. Despite the mistreatment of Jacob by Laban and Joseph by Potiphar’s wife, they remained obedient and faithful to their earthly masters. Both men were blessed by God despite their hardships. Although wavering at times, they put their ultimate trust in the promises of God (Genesis 37-50).

“... TRUST WAS THE ESSENTIAL CORE OF [THE] RELATIONSHIP...”

The role of a steward was also familiar to people in Christ’s day. In Luke 8:3 it is noted that: “Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod’s household manager, and Suzanna, and many others, who provided for them (Jesus and His disciples) out of their means.” Jesus had others who supported and managed the affairs of His ministry. Every household of influence seemed to have a steward in charge. A steward could be both slave (Matthew 24:45) or free (Luke 16) but in both cases given some freedom and authority to run the master’s household affairs. When the master called the steward to give a report of their fruitfulness and management, accountability was rendered. While the master was away, much trust was placed with their steward. Trust was the essential core of that relationship. Jesus illustrated the value and accountability of stewards in the parables of the Minas (Luke 17:11-27), Talents (Matthew 25:14-30), and Wicked Husbandmen (Matthew 21:33-46). Jesus challenged His disciples in Luke 12:42, “who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom the Lord shall make



A Matter of TRUST

Pete Braman
Ministerial Director

ruler over His household.” Most of the steward parables Jesus shared were set in the context of his soon departure or return. The ultimate accountability for us today is to manage all of God’s resources entrusted to us (time, treasure, talents, creation, etc.) In His absence, Jesus has asked us to be fruitful with His most prized possession, His gospel. Peter shared that we as Christians should be “stewards of the manifold grace of God” (1 Peter 4:10).

The ultimate act of a steward is captured in the life and death of Jesus. Jesus’ example of humility is beautifully captured in Philippians 2:6-8, “who, though He was in the form of God, did not account equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking on the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled himself by being obedient unto death, even death on a cross. There is a common expression that says: “If Jesus isn’t Lord of all, He isn’t Lord at all.” Jesus emptied himself in full obedience to God His Father and Master. No part of his life was held back from His Father. His life was entirely dedicated to what mattered most to God. People mattered most to

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A MATTER OF TRUST - CONTINUED

God, the salvation and love of His people mattered most to God. We are His most precious resource. The inspiration of stewardship must come from a place of trust and relationship with our Master, Jesus Christ. A Master who lavishes His love and blessings on us. A Master who is merciful and forgiving. A Master who is always good for His word and promises. A Master will give us all the resources and gifts to be fruitful in His vineyard. Stewardship then becomes a lifestyle that accepts God as owner by virtue of His creation and redemption. The servant who buried his talent had a wrong picture of his master as being a "hard man" (Matthew 25:24). If we see Him as a good Master, we will begin to care about all He has entrusted to us: Our bodies, material possessions, talents, relationships, our money and time. Some of the most beautiful words uttered by Jesus are: "well done, good and faithful servant (steward)!..... come and share your Master's happiness" (Matthew 25:23).

Administrators of **GRACE**

John Grys,
Executive Secretary



The Scriptures are quite clear regarding the question of ultimate ownership. Peter, writing to those located in the Diaspora, reminded the recipients that it goes beyond what we'd normally expect and places the idea of stewarding in a very specific context: "The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear-minded and self-controlled so that you can pray. Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in all its various forms." (1 Peter 4.7-10)

The heightening value of stewarding is cast against the backdrop of, "the end is near." Peter, guided by the Spirit, so eloquently provides a powerful

foundation for this vital element of discipleship. Essentially, the aging follower of Jesus reminds the recipients that when they think about life in the community of the congregation, the foundation of that life is the stewarding of grace. Rarely do we consider the principle of "administrating grace." Yet, the call to the recipient in light of the encroaching end is "administrate grace."

These words are especially poignant for those of us who seek to serve the constituents of the Illinois Conference. I can honestly say that I had read these words for many years and it wasn't until recently I read them against the backdrop of the nearness of the end and administrating grace. I am reminded that at the end of the day, all of the resources that exist in our nearly 14,000 members can only be adequately administered when they are done so from the foundation of grace. The over 120 churches in their various forms are to be seen against the backdrop of administrating not just mortar or brick but grace. The total tithe of a little over \$12 million must be administered in the context of nearness and grace, not just Hamiltons or Lincolns. The various committees serve not just to oversee the assets and liabilities within our territory but to do so against the backdrop of nearness and grace. The oversight of personnel called by God to serve in their particularities must be done so against the backdrop of nearness and grace.

The variables of this stewarding, the consideration for both locality and globally, the personnel and the place, the policy and the person—

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Conference Stewardship in ACTION

Stewardship is something that we are to exercise in all aspects of our lives. That includes personal and professional. At the Illinois Conference office, we work carefully within generally accepted accounting principles and North America Division Working Policy to perform our duties as stewards of the funds given by our church members.

All funds for the operations of the Illinois Conference originate at our local churches and schools. As a treasury team, our stewardship duties include financial management that best utilizes the funds put in our care to accomplish our joint mission. The majority of the money we receive is in the form of tithe. Illinois Conference retains approximately 62% of the tithe. The remaining 38% of tithe is sent on to the Union/Division and General Conference to assist in funding other areas of the Lord's work in the United States and abroad.

In our homes, most of us are accustomed to monthly income that is similar to the orange line in the graph below. One challenge the conference faces each month is the fact that Tithe does not flow into the Conference in equal amounts over the year. The blue bars on the graph show the flow of tithe into the Conference. Please note the large percentage of tithe received in December. It is a challenge to match the regular expenses of the conference

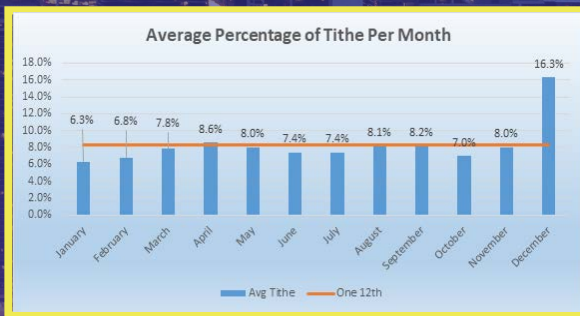
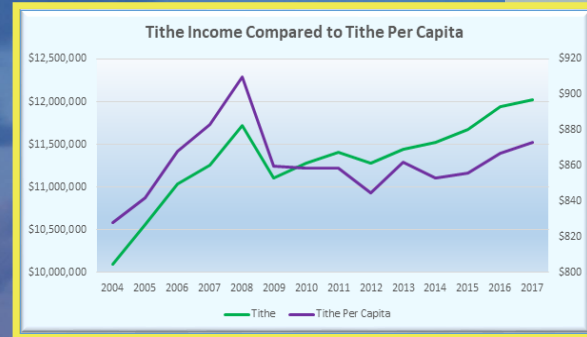


Michael Daum, Treasurer

each month with the fluctuating income received for the same month. Regular tithe paying and timely church remittances help to minimize this challenge.

The overall tithe received in Illinois Conference has been growing in dollars. Note the graph reflecting our growth in tithe after the financial crash in 2008. Our tithe total has slowly surpassed the giving dollars of 2008. Our tithe per capita, or per

church member has declined. More tithe is being given by fewer members.



If you look at the tithe & offering envelope, you will see other specific line items for giving. Illinois Conference members give more than \$45,000 to Illinois Action annually. These funds provide student scholarships, money for church/school building projects, and evangelism. Offerings also include gifts to operate the local churches, schools, and Camp Akita.

As we open a new year, new month, or new week, we each have the opportunity to review our personal commitment to stewardship; and as a part of that, our giving. God has entrusted us each with many blessings. God asks for little financially in return. As you look forward, test and see that the Lord is good! Test His promises that our water and bread will be sure! Test God's willingness to "...throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessings that there will not be room enough to store it." (Malachi 3:10 NIV) May God bless each of us as we seek to be good stewards this year.

Sacrificial, creative and selfless giving brings joy!

ADMINISTRATORS OF GRACE - CONTINUED

all these cannot be seen in isolation from one another nor removed from the foundation of nearness and grace. Our role at the conference office remains to steward what is not ours and to do so in a way that advances the mission we have been given while not sacrificing nearness and grace. This concept of stewarding what is not ours invites us to build an increasing trust in the

activity of the Holy Spirit and not to fall into the trap of believing it is ours here at 619 Plainfield. Grace is not ours. And the evidence of grace, the finances, the properties, the personnel, and yes, the trust granted to us by the various committees and the constituents—these are all not ours. Thus, they are sacred and the expression of God's grace in the state of Illinois that is real,

tangible, and alive in this Land of Lincoln. Grace, administration, nearness of the end, and the concrete expression of this grace through the tangible realities of people, places, and things all become not our things but those eternal assets granted on behalf of a constituency that has entrusted us to place those to the use of God for the mission of His last day movement. May it ever be our prayer in this office!

- John Grys

“**...THE TRUST GRANTED
TO US IS SACRED...**”

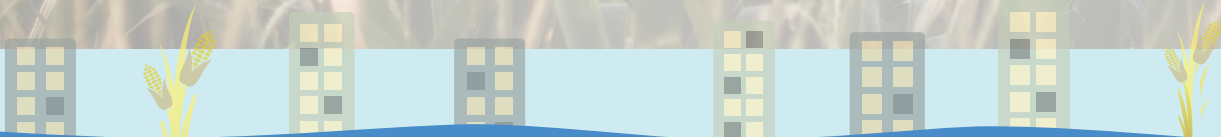
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slips of paper. One by one we redeemed our slips of paper for a brownie. “Car payment,” she announced, and I jumped up to get my share of the goodies. The last brownie disappeared, although my friend, Jose, held his unredeemed slip. “God,” she called. And, Jose, who had the slip with “God” written on it came forward hoping his teacher had one more brownie hidden somewhere. With the knife, the teacher, scraped the crumbs from the bottom of the pan into Jose’s napkin. My friend got a pretty raw deal, I thought, crumbs.

“The brownies on your napkins represent your money,” the teacher explained. “If you don’t give God his share right away, he won’t get anything at all, except maybe some crumbs.”

I have never forgotten that object lesson. That day I learned I must be faithful to God FIRST in everything I have. May that be so for each one of us as we faithfully pursue life with God in 2019.

- Ron Aguilera



INTRODUCING...**The New Hispanic Ministries Director...**

Elder Rubén Bullón is now in his 22nd year as a pastor. He started his ministry in Brazil and moved to the United States nine years ago. For the last 7 years he served the Texas Conference as a Spanish Evangelist. Elder Rubén's ministry is also very active on the internet. Over 40k people are exposed to the good news on his Facebook page. His wife, Rosilene, is a nurse and a media influencer with more than 100k followers on Instagram where she preaches the Gospel. The couple have two daughters: Julia (15) and Laura (9).

We welcome the Bullón family to Illinois and pray that he will have a long and blessed time in the Illinois Conference.

**...Elder Rubén Bullón**

Pr. Rubén Bullón es pastor a 22 años. Comenzó su ministerio en Brasil y desde los ultimo 9 años trabaja en Estados Unidos. Por los últimos 7 años sirvió a la iglesia en Texas como evangelista hispano de esa conferencia ademas de desarrollar un fuerte ministerio en Internet con mas de 40k seguidores en Facebook. Su esposa Rosilene Bullon es enfermera y influenciado de medias sociales con mas de 100k seguidores en Instagram donde también predica la palabra de Dios. La pareja tiene dos hijas: Julia (15) y Laura (9).



Seventh-day
Adventist® Church

ILLINOIS CONFERENCE

2019 Sunset Calendar



Offering Schedule

	Chicago	Rockford	Moline	Special Offering Appeal		Chicago	Rockford	Moline	Special Offering Appeal
JAN 5	4:33	4:38	4:46	Local Church Budget	JUL 6	8:28	8:35	8:38	Local Church Budget
12	4:41	4:45	4:53	IL Action-Evangelism	13	8:25	8:32	8:35	Women's Ministries*
19	4:49	4:53	5:01	Local Church Budget	20	8:20	8:27	8:30	Local Church Budget
26	4:57	5:02	5:10	Religious Liberty*	27	8:13	8:21	8:24	IL Action-Bldg Projects
FEB 2	5:06	5:11	5:19	Local Church Budget	AUG 3	8:06	8:13	8:17	Local Church Budget
9	5:15	5:20	5:27	Adventist TV Ministry*	10	7:57	8:04	8:08	AU/LLU/Oakwood Univ*
16	5:24	5:29	5:36	Local Church Budget	17	7:47	7:54	7:58	Local Church Budget
23	5:33	5:38	5:45	IL Action-Bldg Projects	24	7:37	7:43	7:48	IL Action-Evangelism
MAR 2	5:41	5:47	5:53	Local Church Budget	31	7:25	7:32	7:37	Local Church Budget
9	5:50	5:55	6:01	Adventist World Radio*	SEP 7	7:14	7:20	7:25	Local Church Budget
16	6:58	7:03	7:09	Local Church Budget	14	7:02	7:08	7:13	Local Church Budget
23	7:05	7:11	7:17	IL Action-Worthy Students	21	6:49	6:55	7:01	Local Church Budget
30	7:13	7:19	7:24	NAD Evangelism	28	6:37	6:43	6:49	IL Action-Church Planting
APR 6	7:21	7:27	7:32	Local Church Budget	OCT 5	6:25	6:31	6:37	Local Church Budget
13	7:29	7:35	7:40	Christian Record Serv.*	12	6:14	6:19	6:25	Voice of Prophecy*
20	7:36	7:43	7:47	Local Church Budget	19	6:03	6:08	6:15	Local Church Budget
27	7:44	7:51	7:55	IL Action-Church Planting	26	5:52	5:58	6:05	IL Action-Worthy Students
MAY 4	7:52	7:58	8:02	Local Church Budget	NOV 2	5:43	5:48	5:55	Local Church Budget
11	7:59	8:06	8:10	Disaster & Famine Relief ^{ff}	9	4:35	4:40	4:48	Global Mission*
18	8:06	8:13	8:17	Local Church Budget	16	4:29	4:33	4:41	Local Church Budget
25	8:13	8:20	8:23	IL Action-Evangelism	23	4:23	4:28	4:36	IL Action-Church Planting
JUN 1	8:19	8:26	8:29	Local Church Budget	30	4:20	4:25	4:33	Go & Tell
8	8:23	8:31	8:34	Local Church Budget	DEC 7	4:19	4:23	4:32	Local Church Budget
15	8:27	8:34	8:37	Local Church Budget	14	4:19	4:24	4:32	Adventist Comm. Serv.*
22	8:29	8:36	8:39	IL Action-Bldg Projects	21	4:22	4:27	4:35	Local Church Budget
29	8:29	8:36	8:39	Worthy Students	28	4:26	4:31	4:39	IL Action-Evangelism

“So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God.” Hebrews 4:9

Feel free to cut this handy calendar out so that you can use it for a quick reference all year through!

This can also be downloaded as a PDF file for easy printing from the Illinois Conference website: www.ilcsda.org/stewardship



Presenting Jesus **IRRESISTIBLY!**

Pathfinders

Southern Area Mega Weekend

February 1-3

Calling all Central and Southern Area Pathfinders! Come join us for a super-charged weekend full of fun and fellowship on the weekend of Feb. 2! Look out for details coming soon!

Area level PBE

February 2nd

Brace yourselves...PBE is coming! On February 2nd, we will have our Conference-wide Area Level PBE. Pathfinders will be tested over the book of Luke, so be sure to check out the SDA Bible Commentary on that book, found online at pathfindersonline.org/PBE. Be on the lookout for more info regarding PBE as testing dates are soon approaching.

Synergy

February 16th

Join us at the MA Center on the old Broadview Academy campus, on Feb. 16th, as we gather together to engage in our annual Synergy! Come be a part of over 300 Pathfinders who will rally together to learn more about our creator!



Seventh-day
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