

Institute for Christian Teaching  
Education Department of Seventh-day Adventists

**MANAGING THE FINANCIAL RESOURCES OF A FAMILY:  
AN ADVENTIST PERSPECTIVE**

by  
Emily R. Tebbs Dube  
School of Business  
University of Eastern Africa, Baraton  
Kenya

158-93 Institute for Christian Teaching  
12501 Old Columbia Pike  
Silver Spring, MD 20904, USA

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## **MANAGING THE FINANCIAL RESOURCES OF A FAMILY : AN ADVENTIST PERSPECTIVE**

*Economy does not mean niggardliness, but a prudent expenditure of means because there is a great work to be done (The Adventist Home, page 378).*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Some christians share the belief that a sign of good christianity is poverty, but this is not biblical. On the other hand, a christian family who is striving to become financially independent for the mere purpose of obtaining financial security in this world is also not biblical. These views in life have missed God's purpose for appointing the family as steward over His goods and the advent message of the last days.

Although God does not approve of the extreme of hoarding riches and wealth, neither is he pleased with His people's perpetual dependence on others. He requires that Christians should attempt to rid themselves of all financial dependence that will hamper their duties to God and their neighbors as well as to their family members. One level of independence that is praiseworthy is "to desire to bear your own [financial] weight and not to eat the bread of dependence .... It is a noble, generous ambition that dictates the wish to be self-supporting" (The Adventist Home, p. 374).

### **OBJECTIVE**

In this essay I will use a microeconomic approach to introduce the principle of correct financial management, strictly from an adventist/biblical perspective, in addressing the needs of the family and others, and promoting the advancement of God's cause. The essay's format may be used as an educational guide to help develop in our students and faculty the christian concept of financial management based on God's requirement for the utilization of His wealth (income) given to a family.

In order to put the concept of financial management into an adventist christian framework, I have decided to introduce the title 'Acknowledgement of the Rightful Owner' in the first section of the essay. The rest of the essay will cover the four principal purposes of managing the family's financial resources based on God's objectives. The conclusion will point to the Creator's principle (on financial management) as the only solution to the individual, family, and world's (economic) problems.

The dissemination of the concept can be introduced in three ways: (1) taught in S.D.A. institutions by integrating the concept with relevant courses, (2) through seminar presentation, and (3) as a key information to the theology and religious studies majors in our institutions.

### **Acknowledgement of The Rightful Owner**

Because God created the earth (including ourselves), **He owns** it. But when He gave dominion of the earth to Adam and Eve, He gave them the responsibility of managing and caring for it. Thus, we became God's

Stewards. As defined in the Webster's New World Dictionary, a **steward** is "a person morally responsible for the careful use of money, time, talents or other resources, especially with respect to the principles or need of a community or group".

Ellen G. White (1958) talks of a steward as one who:

...identifies himself with his master. He accepts the responsibilities of a steward, and he must act in his master's stead, doing as his master would do were he presiding. His master's interests become his. The position of a steward is one of dignity, because his master trusts him. If in any wise he acts selfishly, and turns the advantages gained by trading with his lord's goods to his own advantage, he has perverted the trust reposed in him (p. 113).

Being a steward of God includes the management of our time, money and talents for the fulfillment of His purpose. Proper money management enables a christian family to worship God with all of the resources entrusted to her without waste. King David said in I Chronicles 29:14, "But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? For all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee". To emphasize this point, he further said that God owns the world and its inhabitants (Psalm 24:1). Therefore, to act in partnership with God a family needs to know the requirements of God.

**Why has God chosen the human race as stewards?** Put so beautifully in the book Counsels on Stewardship, "God is not dependent upon men for the advancement of His cause. He might have made angels the ambassadors of His truth. He might have made known His will, as He proclaimed the law from Sinai with His own voice. But in order to cultivate a spirit of benevolence in us, He has chosen to employ men to do this work" (p. 20). God in His loving kindness did not only see it fit to create humans in His own image but as an expression of His love for us He continues the process by permitting the human race to perpetuate His character in the management of His wealth.

**What does God intend to accomplish by making the human race steward?**

He thus makes man the medium through which to distribute His blessings on earth. God planned the system of beneficence, in order that man might become like his Creator, benevolent and unselfish in character, and finally be a partaker with Christ of the eternal, glorious reward. However large, however small the possessions of any individual, let him remember that it is his only in trust. For his strength, skill, time, talents, opportunities, and means, he must render an account to God. This is an individual work; God gives to us, that we may become like Him, generous, noble, beneficent, by giving others. (ibid., p.15 and 22).

In its appointed duty as God's steward, a family will learn to develop the character of God. No other way can be as equally effective and permanent then the method God has decided to employ through stewardship. A family

that knows God's principle in relation to the use of His wealth and employ it, can accomplish tremendous good for the advancement of God's cause in this world.

The rest of the essay will be addressing the question, how has God instructed us to manage His wealth? This will be accomplished by elaborating on the four principal purposes for the utilization of His wealth.

### **God's Unquestionable Demand Malachi 3:8-10**

In explaining Malachi 3:8-12, Ellen White (1940) said,

We are not left to stumble along in darkness and disobedience. The truth is plainly stated and it can be understood by all who wish to be honest in the sight of God. A tithe of **all our income** is the Lord's. He lays His hand upon that portion which He has specified that we shall return to Him, and says, **I allow you to use My bounties after you have laid aside the tenth, and have come before Me with gifts and offerings** (bold inserted, p.82).

Of all that the Lord owns and has give to us, He demanded that His stewards should return to him a tenth of His wealth/income. In doing so, a family attest of its christian commitment. God's principle of tithe enables a family to be awaken and remain in the state of constant reminder of the Creator and His proprietorship of the world and its inhabitants. With the knowledge that all-things are of the Lord and when the entrusted wealth of this world is managed according to His specification the family will "receive that purchased possession which is to be [its] own - glory, honour, and immortality" (The Adventist Home, p. 367).

It may sometimes prove difficult to honour the Lord in tithe and offerings, particularly when a family is experiencing financial difficulties. But I strongly believe in systematic benevolence as suggested by Ellen White. This method of honouring our obligation to God both in tithe and offerings will eliminate the worry to give God what is His even if we are faced with debts.

**How does systematic benevolence work?** The Apostle Paul prescribes a principle of giving to the Lord that applies to both tithe and offerings. As it was put forth by Ellen White (1940) it reads,

Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store , as God hath prospered him. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. [Thus], let each regularly examine his income, which is all a blessing from God, and set apart the tithe as a separate fund, to be sacredly the Lord's. This fund should not in any case be devoted to any other use; it is to be devoted solely to support the ministry of the gospel. After the tithe is set apart, let gifts and offerings be apportioned, as God hath prospered you (p. 80, 81).

God has not left the family in the dark about His system of giving tithe and offerings. Therefore, if the family follows His method of returning His tithe and offerings before the other financial obligations are considered, the practice will become easier. "The plan of systematic benevolence will prove a safeguard to every family against temptations to spend means for needless things, and especially will it prove a blessing to the rich by guarding them from indulging in extravagances" (1952, p.368-9). God has purposed the tithing system "that you may learn to fear the Lord your God always" as the owner of all creation (Deuteronomy 14:23). A family in financial difficulties may claim God's promises which are sure - Psalm 37:25, Proverbs 3:9,10, and Malachi 3:10-12.

### **Meeting The Family's Needs**

*If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel. 1 Tim. 5:8*

To drive home this point, Ellen White (1940) said,

The religion you profess makes it as much your duty to employ your time during the six working days, as to attend church on the Sabbath. You are not diligent in business. You let hours, days, and even weeks pass without accomplishing anything. The very best sermon you could preach to the world would be to show a decided reformation in your life, and provide for your own family (p.253).

As much as it is not God's will that His people should deprive themselves of that which is really necessary for their health and comfort, He also does not approve of wantonness and extravagance and display. Families with hearts that are anchored in God will take God's word as their guide. They will learn of Christ meekness and lowliness and will cultivate His character which will shut the door against innumerable temptations.

Some families may be unable to meet their financial needs due to reasons that are beyond the families' control. However, those financial difficulties that are within the control of the families are generally attributed to one or more of the following reasons :

- A) Earning insufficient income
- B) The Credit Trap
- C) Inability to economize (Poor Financial Management)

#### **A) Earning insufficient income**

A family may be earning insufficient income because of the breadwinner(s) 'attitude toward certain jobs (labour intensive) due to his\their educational background(s), family status etc.. But White (1940) counselled that,

it is wrong for you to fail to use your strength to the best advantage as it is for a rich man to covetously retain his riches

because it is agreeable to do so" God has given you strength and skill, but you have not used them. Your strength is sufficient to abundantly support your family. Rise in the morning, even while the stars are shining, if need be. Lay your plans to do something, and then accomplish it (ibid., p.250 and 253).

If the family's very modest income is insufficient to its needs, the members of the family can participate in supplementing its income based on their ages and abilities by earning additional income from taking part-time jobs or even a change of job may be necessary. Ellen White (1940) admonished,

When a man sees that he is not successful, why does he not betake himself to prayer, or change his work? There are stormy times before us, and the Lord will accept all who can cooperate with Him. Practice self-denial and self-sacrifice. Consider every movement carefully and prayerfully (p.256).

It is always important to remember that God will use us in what ever honourable employment we are in either with the church or in a secular world. The world is His, and He wants His influence to permeate it in its entirety.

#### **B) The Credit Trap**

As Adventists, we should always avoid getting into consumer debts. Consumer debt is Satan's way of keeping us from responding to God's financial objectives which are meeting the needs of the family, others, and the advancement of God's cause. Therefore, "all must practice economy. No worker should manage his affairs in a way to incur debt.... When one voluntarily becomes involved in debt, he is entangling himself in one of Satan's nets which he sets for souls" (ibid., p.254).

To a family with consumer debts, Ellen White (1940) said, "Better deny yourself food and sleep than be guilty of keeping from others their just dues. (p.254) The Apostle Paul admonished, "Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another" (Romans 13:8).

Therefore, a family with consumer debts as a major concern should strive to get out of the debts in the earliest possible time. First the family should make a commitment to be faithful to God's will and acknowledge that He is the rightful owner of all wealth. This will enable the family to claim God's promises and infinite power to eliminate its debts. The claim on God's ability to provide the means to eliminate debts is sure because a christian family with debts brings reproach on the cause of God by endangering the integrity of His people as being unreliable. As a guide, G. Edward Reid in his book It's Your Money! Isn't it? used the simple three steps plan for debt elimination as stated in the book Counsels on Stewardship, page 257. I would instead outline this simple plan into six steps which should make it self-explanatory.

1. Be determined never to incur another debt;
2. Make a solemn covenant with God that by His blessing you will pay your debts and then owe no man anything even if it means you have to live on bread and water;
3. Take care of the pennies, and the dollars will take care of themselves;
4. Deny self at least while you are walled in with debts;
5. Do not be discouraged or turn back;
6. Work them off as fast as possible.

Reid suggested that the process of eliminating debt is to list all the family's debts in a descending order from the largest to the smallest. The family should then strive at eliminating its debt starting from the smallest monetary amount going upward as quickly as possible. In this way, the family can double or increase the payment toward the next item as the debt of smaller monetary units have been eliminated. However, it is always best to save and purchase in cash those items with short and medium life expectancies such as foodstuffs, wears, household appliances, furniture, and car (if possible).

There are some medium and long terms investments that may prove impossible to be paid for completely in cash. For example, the purchasing of a house , capital investment and maybe a car may need to be obtained through a mortgage or financial loan. However, it is advisable to move wisely. Before incurring debt the family should first sit down and count the cost in relation to the debt's present and future financial implications and the impact it may have on the family's financial obligations to God. In this light, I believe God expects us to move ahead in faith and with continuous communication with Him at which time He will inspire His people of the right decision to make.

I am recommending Reid's (1993) eight principles of borrowing that a christian family should follow as a guide.

1. Borrow as little as possible
2. Make the payback term as short as possible
3. Have a fixed rate of interest
4. Be sure there is no prepayment penalty
5. Avoid personal surety
6. Shop for the money
7. Do not purchase credit life insurance - I will elaborate on insurance later
8. Know what you are doing (p. 87-90).

With the above guide and admonition, christian families can own their own home as an experience of what it will be like when they inherit their everlasting home in heaven.

The sense of being owners of their own homes would inspire them with a strong desire for improvement. They would soon acquire skill in planting and devising for themselves; their children would be educated to habits of industry and economy, and the intellect would be greatly strengthened (1952, p.373).



With this encouragement of home ownership, a christian family should hold strongly to the biblical perspective that discourages long-term indebtedness and thus structure loan repayment conditions (by phases) on the seven year release system stated in Deuteronomy 15:1.

When a family relieves itself of its debt obligation quickly, it will become debt free much sooner and also minimize the interest payment to the financial institution. The family will then be placed in a position to meet its other financial needs and work toward the advancement of God's cause.

### **C) Inability to economize**

Most families spend money on things that they really don't need or are unable to manage their money. They need to develop a management attitude and take control of their spending habits. The best way to do this is by budgeting.

#### **Budgeting**

- is a major way to determine where you are wasting money, and
- it gives you control of your finances.

In order to take the cross of Christ, the first lesson one needs to learn is self-denial. The budgeting process enable a family to distinguish between its **needs** and its **wants**. Thus, by keeping a budget for one month in the most simplified way, the family will be able to decide what will be spent and where the funds can best be put to good use.

In addition to budgeting, there may be a need for the family to re-align its assets around in order to free money for the advancement of God's work. The areas that generally need re-alignment are:

Types of savings portfolios: Non-taxable, high interest savings account as opposed to taxable, low-interest savings accounts with the same risk probability.

Low-value, high cost life assurance: Using term insurance and applying the balance from the difference of an expensive life insurance policy toward the needs to be mentioned below and for the promotion of God's cause.

Long term loans: The conventional practice of twenty five years mortgage loan for a home or the three to five years car loan: Paying off the loan in the shortest possible time without a prepayment penalty will both release the family from the loan repayment earlier and make funds available for other needs.

Since we can only invest either toward the advancement of God's cause or Satan's, a christian family should strive at all times to economize when meeting its needs in order to justly return to God His wealth as much as possible for the completion of His work.

### **The Family's Needs:**

When the family has fulfilled its obligation to God in tithe and offerings, the balance of the income that is left after taxes have been deducted should be broken down to meet the needs of its members. However, the family should be careful to keep its expenses within its income by restricting its wants.

There are some general areas that may be categorized as the areas of needs for an average family. From a christian perspective, a family's needs are in the following areas:

**Housing:** A family's budget for housing expenses includes - mortgage/rent, house insurance, property rates (tax), electricity and utilities, telephone and maintenance. With the present high cost of accommodation in most countries, a family may find it relatively difficult to afford a decent home on a low budget. Thus, it is important for the family to economize in the following areas - A sufficiently blanket term insurance policy, for example, will drastically reduce its insurance bill in all the categories. Furthermore, a cheaper use of energy supply and less use of the telephone will reduce the Utilities bills. Also, if the family is paying mortgage loan toward their house, the application of Deuteronomy 15:1 with the suggestion of eliminating debt as quickly as possible will reduce waste.

**Food:** There are several ways a family can strive toward reducing the food budget depending on where the family may be residing. Generally in Africa, a family will have a piece of land as part of the homestead or a traditional home. This land can be cultivated to provide the family with food. Also, both the parents and children should carry packed lunch to work and school instead of eating out for both economic and health reasons. With regard to the purchasing of groceries, I would suggest from experience that it is wiser to purchase non-perishable groceries in bulk in order to minimize on costs and avoid a shortage situation. However, this method of purchasing requires self-discipline on the required quantity needed to be utilized per month, if not, the desired economic objective will not be accomplished. If bulk purchasing is difficult for a family because of the family's financial constraint, several families may come together to purchase in bulk for the reason of economizing.

**Clothing:** Budgeting for clothing in Africa may not be as demanding as compared to Europe and North America because of Africa's moderate climate. Nevertheless, it is advisable for the family to make allowance for clothing to meet its need when required.

One way in which a family can economize on the purchasing of clothing is for the father and sons to select two or three basic colours acceptable to them and match them with a variety of accents such as shirts and ties. Also, fashion designs of the outfits should be conventional and attractive in order not to become out dated. It is always advisable to write a yearly list of the clothing that may be required and thus purchase them during out of season or sale discount periods.

Another way of economizing on clothing budget will be to swap children's clothes within the family, with friends, and with relatives. The mothers at my previous church (including myself) did not mind swapping their children's clothes among themselves and the practice proved very helpful and economical.

**Education:** Unfortunately, there are very few student loans from the governments and other agencies within Africa. A nation like Zimbabwe has a system which grants student loans for university education, but upon graduation, the students leave college with huge loans to repay (which is not the best way of starting life).

Children should be taught that education is an investment toward their future. With this full understanding of the importance of education, children should be encouraged to believe that their education is both theirs and their parents responsibility. Therefore, they should contribute by working toward alleviating some of the educational expenses. Sometimes it is difficult for students to raise much funds due to the low minimum wages being earned in Africa in relation to the high educational costs. Thus, both children and parents who are living prudently and debt-free - particularly in areas of huge loans such as mortgage - will be able to transfer the surplus funds toward the furtherance of christian education at the college level. I truly believe that children who have come to value education will work hard academically and make correct use of the christian educational training afforded to them.

Above all, it should be understood by children that the very best legacy which parents can leave their children is a knowledge of useful labour and the example of a life characterized by disinterested benevolence. By such a life they show the true value of money, that it is only to be appreciated for the good that it will accomplish in relieving their own wants and the necessities of others, and in advancing the cause of God (White, 1952, p.390).

**Medical Services:** The budget toward medical expenses will depend on the medical system of the nation in which the family is residing. If the family has medical aid through their employer and/or medical insurance, it will minimize its medical expenses such as doctor/dentist fees, drugs etc..

However, the best way a family will minimize medical expenses will be by applying the eight health principles stated as **N-E-W-S-T-A-R-T**. They are: **nutrition**, regular **exercise**, plenty of **water**, sufficient **sunlight**, **temperance** by abstinence from harmful substance and moderate use of that which is good, fresh **air**, adequate **rest**, and **trust** in the power of God.

**Consumer Debts:** Apart from home mortgage, capital investment, and car loans, this category covers all other loans. The objective of financial management from a christian perspective is to eliminate debts. For one to budget for consumer debts will only encourage the family to acquire debts. A family with existing debts should aim at paying the debts off as quickly as possible by economizing in the other areas of needs.

**Automobile(s):** The purchase of a car is the second most expensive expenditure a family will have to make. Owning a car does not only require a family to pay for the cost of the car but also payments are required for the car insurance, license and inspection fees, taxes, car maintenance, gas and oil, and saving for replacement.

There are several cost saving measures one may employ to minimize car expenses such as - reduce use of the car, learning to do simple car repair and maintenance work (by going for training if necessary), and car pool when possible.

**Insurance:** Getting a blanket term insurance policy that is sufficient to cover all the family's security needs will go a long way in addressing the various categories that require security. Therefore, a modest amount of the family's income should provide adequate insurance coverage since term insurance is cheap. Further examination of insurance will be mentioned under savings.

**Savings:** A family who has the discipline to live on a budget will generally have some surplus funds that can be put aside for savings. The amount a family should work toward saving depends on the reasons the funds are being put aside for. For example, If a family is working toward a down payment for a home, the amount of savings will be reasonably substantial. Generally, experts advise that savings should be the equivalent of three to six months' salary. Though this suggestion may be good, the family should first consider the reasons for the savings both in the light of the family needs and their obligations toward the advancement of the Lord's work. There are several reasons why a family will need to save and the four major reasons are:

- A. EMERGENCY
- B. PREMATURE DEATH
- C. HOME PURCHASE AND CAPITAL INVESTMENT
- D. RETIREMENT

**A. EMERGENCY**

The family may need to save in order to meet some of the needs mentioned above. But the need to save becomes crucial when the breadwinner(s) loses his/their jobs.

Emergency savings is for protection and its purpose is to provide a "cushion" against unforeseen problems and disaster. An accumulation of two to three months' salary savings, as emergency funds, will prepare the family for the worst. The type of savings' plan for emergency funds (and other savings plan) should be easily accessible in the event the fund is needed and the policy of heavy withdrawal penalties should be avoided. The following types of savings plans may be considered - savings plan at banks, trust companies, credit unions, and any type of savings certificates that will not tie up your money. Also, savings plan that are non-taxable will enhance the return to the family.

### B. 'PREMATURE' DEATH

Premature death of the breadwinner is a concern of every family, particularly when there is only one parent who has a regular employment. The loss of income would be devastating if the breadwinner dies when the children are young, the family has a home mortgage loan, and other debts. Therefore, it is advisable for a family to purchase insurance policy.

The purchase of life insurance is one of the most important expenditures the average family makes in its lifetime. It is however one of the most misunderstood. A family has to make the right decision about the **kind** and **amount** of life insurance to buy.

The true purpose of life insurance is to provide financial resources to a family against premature death when the family members are young, ill, disable and are still depended on the breadwinner financially. It is the loss of that earning potential that makes life insurance a necessity thus can be seen as a substitute for the cash and other wealth that would have been provided had the breadwinner lived. This concern is relevant mostly in the early years of the family.

In order to determine what insurance policy to buy, you need to understand the reasons for wanting a life insurance policy. Most families need more coverage in the earlier stage of marriage and less in the later stage. Therefore, life insurance is **not a permanent need** that the family should have.

**In the early years,  
you need a lot of coverage...**

1. Children young
2. High debt
3. House mortgage
4. Loss of income would be devastating

**In the early years,  
you don't have money...**

**In the later years,  
you had better.**

1. Children grown
2. Low (no) debts
3. Mortgage paid
4. Retirement income needed

**In the later years,  
you don't.**

\*Williams. A.L. (1987)

For proper financial planning, it is recommended that a family buys **inexpensive term life insurance only**. A. L. Williams (1987) explain the above choice of life insurance policy from the basic concept of the "Theory of Decreasing Responsibility" (p. 27). It means that your need for insurance as a family is greater when your responsibilities are greatest, but as the family gets older its responsibilities decrease. At this later stage the family needs very little or no "death protection" in the form of insurance. Term insurance, being a cheaper insurance policy, will not only provide sufficient financial coverage when the family needs it most but will also release the surplus from the difference in the costs of the conventional life insurance policies toward the family's savings investment

and/or be used to help others. In addition, since term insurance is temporary, it will fall away and additional funds will be made available for God's work.

### C. HOME PURCHASE AND CAPITAL INVESTMENT

There are only two places in the world where we can deposit our treasures - in God's storehouse or in Satan's, and all that is not devoted to Christ's service is counted on Satan's side and goes to strengthen his cause (Testimonies, vol. 6, p. 448).

Christian families should always be concerned about paying more than what is absolutely necessary when providing for their needs. Wastage, be it in excessive lifestyle or over payment on an item, is an abuse of God's resources and therefore are storing resources in Satan's storehouse. The two most common and significant areas that take a substantial amount of a family's income are the purchasing of a home and the establishing of a business.

For simplicity sake, I will use Reid's (1993) simple approach to present this point. Reid presented a schedule that compares a \$60,000 mortgage loan at an annual interest rate of 12 per cent. (pp.91-93).

Type of Repayment	P/I	Life of Loan	Interest Paid	Interest Saved
Conventional	617.17	30	162,181.20	-0-
Bi-Weekly	308.59	19.04	92,752.05	69,429.15
Weekly	154.29	18.79	90,809.33	71,372.20
15 Year	720.10	15	69,618.45	92,562.75
B-Weekly	360.05	12.3	54,617.36	107,563.84
7 Year	1,059.16	7	28,969.95	133,211.25

The first line shows a conventional 30-year mortgage at a monthly payment of \$617.17 for principle and interest. Over the life of the loan, the family will pay \$162,181.20 in interest in addition to the \$60,000 originally owed. This is possible because most of each payment goes toward interest payment. If the family pays bi-weekly equivalent to the monthly amount, the loan will be paid up within 19.04 years with a savings in interest payment of \$62,429.15 that can be invested into God's storehouse through christian education for the children and the advancement of His cause. Also, the family can employ the concept of **Mortgage Acceleration** by simply paying the loan off early by making additional principle payments each month or lump sums of cash at various times.

A family who adopts the biblical view of not being in debt for more than seven years, will save interest to the amount of \$133,211.25. I strongly believe that the biblical view is applicable to business investments. To make it feasible, one may purchase a home or start a business in phases and still get to ones' goal along with reaping the financial benefit in terms of savings.

The Christian in his business life is to represent to the world the manner in which our Lord would conduct business enterprises. In every transaction he is to make it manifest that God is his teacher (Counsels on Stewardship, p.556).

#### **D. RETIREMENT**

Many Adventist Families today who had not learned the basic concept of financial management are living in poverty, particularly so among retired African church workers. I have observed that there are many pastors and lay men who have retired without owning a home and receiving pension incomes that are much lower than the inflation rate of the nation in which they are residing. In Africa, like most other continents, the social service systems are not sufficiently developed thus can not meet the needs of their citizens. Thus, the retirees suffer the most financially. Also, the cultural supportive financial network (the children) of the past has been eroded by the influence of Western Civilization both culturally and economically.

Furthermore: the pension plans of most nations were designed not on profit motivation (to be used as a primary income) in order to address the increasing needs of the beneficiaries, but as a supplement to retirement income. Therefore, with the ever increasing growth rate of the population of pensioners and a decreasing ratio of the number of workers paying into the plan for each recipient, it has become obvious that pension plans can't sustain their recipients adequately. However, many people have come to rely on their pension exclusively as their future source of income.

Therefore, Christian families who have been blessed with God's wealth should practice financial management as a necessity to avoid becoming liabilities to their loved ones and the community as a whole. A couple who has paid for their home, is debt-free, and has reasonable savings to supplement their retirement income, can be a blessing both financially and experience wise to others in need even when they are not formally employed. Because the practice of retirement is not biblical, the church in particular should make use of the aged in whatever areas necessary for the advancement of God's work. This will keep the old people productive and vibrant.

As a summary, the schedule below may be used as a guide but not a rule as each family is at different economic levels. Also, the percentages allotted to each category can be shifted or shrunk according to the family's requirements.

Percentage	
Tithe	10
Offerings	5 to 10
Taxation	(depending on the tax structure)

100 Percentage of Net Income			
Housing	35%	Debts	0%
Food	15%	Auto	15%
Clothing	5%	Insurance	5%
Education	10%	Savings	10%
Medical Services	5%		

### Meeting The Needs Of Others

***Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses. Luke 12:15***

God has introduced giving as a way to sustain His cause and relieve the suffering and provide for the needy. White (1952) said,

He has ordained that giving should become a habit, that it may counteract the dangerous and deceitful sin of covetousness. Continual giving starves covetousness to death. Systematic benevolence is designed in the order of God to tear away treasures from the covetous as fast as they are gained, and to consecrate them to the Lord, to whom they belong... God Knows our danger and has hedged us about with means to prevent our own ruin. He requires the constant exercise of benevolence, that the force of habit in good works may break the force of habit in an opposite direction (p.370-1).

To represent Christ's character, a family has to expel selfishness and give all that it can spare to the needy after economizing on its needs and not the imaginary wants.

Poverty and distress in families will come to our knowledge, and afflicted and suffering ones will have to be relieved. We know very little of the human suffering of that exists everywhere about us; but as we have opportunity, we should be ready to render immediate assistance to those who are under severe pressure (ibid., p.370).

Though I strongly believe that God wants his stewards to operate business enterprises because money is a needed treasure, we should be careful not to lavish it upon those who need it not but on the needies. White (1940) said,

of what value is untold wealth, if it is hoarded in expensive mansions, or in bank stock? What do these weigh in the scale in comparison with the salvation of the souls for whom Christ, the Son of the infinite God, has died? (p.38).

In relation to the present world economy, inflation and the indebtedness of nations can cause the family to lose all it has hoarded. Also, the Lord



has said in the last days His people will not be permitted to buy and sell. (Rev. 13:17). Therefore, "it is a snare of the last days to involve God's people in loss of their Lord's entrusted capital, that should be used wisely in the work of winning souls" (ibid, p.243). Thus, we all are responsible to our fellow men and accountable to God for the management of his wealth.

### **Advancing The Cause of God**

***Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.  
Matthew 28:19***

God can not permit this world to last forever because of sin. He wants to reclaim His world and those of His creation who are seeking to return to Him. Upon His return, "...all people, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed" (Daniel 7:14).

Therefore, God is inviting His stewards to participate in His redemption story because His ultimate goal is unchangeable. The family's participation is more for its good and salvation than for the accomplishment of God's final goal for this world. White (1940) said,

very few realize the strength of their love for money until the test is brought to bear upon them. Many who profess to be Christ's followers then show that they are unprepared for heaven. Their works testify that they love wealth more than they do their neighbour or their God. Like the rich young man they inquire the way of life; but when it is pointed out and the cost estimated, and they see that the sacrifice of earthly riches is demanded, they decide that heaven costs too much. The greater the treasures laid up on the earth, the more difficult it is for the possessors to realize that they are not his own, but are lent him to be used to God's glory (p.150).

The crowning act of stewardship is how the family dispose of God's wealth upon death. A christian family can not complete its stewardship responsibilities by transferring its assets to others or even to the children through the form of a will. That family even upon death will be accountable for the way the heir(s) will use the wealth. A good example of stewardship is the example of King David and his desire to build a house for God. To ensure the success of the project, he made the necessary arrangements for the construction of the temple. Though he did not see the temple built, he made proper arrangements for its completion after his death.

As stated by Ellen White,

The Lord would have His followers dispense their means while they can do it themselves. Some may inquire: 'Must we actually dispossess ourselves of everything which we call our own?' We may not be

required to do this now; but we must be willing to do so for Christ's sake. We must acknowledge that our possessions are 'absolutely His, by using of them freely whenever means is needed to advance His cause (Testimonies, vol.4,p. 479).

If God's follower fails to write a will for any reason upon death, his/her assets will be disposed of under the state's law of intestacy and it is assumed that the individual was an atheist. Thus, the cause of God will not be taken considered.

[Therefore], parents should exercise the right that God has given them. He entrusted to them the talents He would have them use to His glory. The children were not to become responsible for the talents of the father. While they have sound minds and good judgement, parents should, with prayerful consideration, and with the help of proper counselor who have experience in the truth and a knowledge of the divine will, make disposition of their property. If they have children who are afflicted or are struggling in poverty, and who will make a judicious use if means, they should be considered. But if they have unbelieving children who have an abundance of this world, and who are serving the world, they commit a sin against the Master who has made them His stewards, by placing means in their hands merely because they are their children. God's claims are not to be lightly regarded. If parents, while they live, would assist their children to help themselves, it would be better than to leave them a large amount at death. Children who are left to rely principally upon their own exertions make better men and women, and are better fitted for practical life than those children who have depended upon their father's estate (Testimonies, vol.3, pp.121-123).

The works that follow the righteous dead are all that have been done for the advancement of His cause with all the Lord has blessed the individual. Therefore, can the family claim the promise of Revelation 14:13 based on its method of financial management?

#### **CONCLUSION**

Our wealth should be used to bring souls to the acknowledgement of Christ and God. This demand is not only placed upon believers, but also upon the unbelievers. By God's infinite power both the believers and unbelievers are kept alive by Him supplying the breath which keeps life in our bodies.

If the unbelievers are not exempted from returning to God His wealth, it is worse for Adventist believers, because we have particularly been blessed by God and we are more aware of and acknowledge the source of our blessings. Ellen White (1940) said,

I was shown that there is no lack of means amongst Sabbath keeping Adventists. [However], the greatest danger is in the accumulations of property. Some are continually increasing their cares and labours; they are overcharged. The result is, God and the wants of His cause are nearly forgotten by them; they are spiritually dead. They are required to make a sacrifice to God, an offering (p. 153).

Thus, I strongly believe that if the law given by God for the benefit of the poor had continued to be carried out, how different would be the present condition of the world, morally, spiritually and temporally! Selfishness and self-importance would not be manifested as now, but each would cherish a kind regard for the happiness and welfare of others; and such widespread destitution as is now seen in many lands would not exist (Patriarchs and Prophets, p.536)..

This is the solution to the world's problems.

Finally, financial Management from an Adventist perspective is not about savings and investment alone, but about the accomplishment of God's goal for this world. When learning the skill of financial management, it's important to develop an understanding of the christian's motive for managing the Lord's resources. Therefore, I have tried to bring to my readers the awareness and the "why" for saving, that addresses the provision of the family, others, and ultimately the advancement of God's cause.

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