

cheerful giving. As we faithfully return a portion of our income, we'll find an increasing confidence in God's ability to meet our needs. And through that process, not only will we likely discover that we can indeed manage to return a full ten percent tithe, but that our hearts are now more focused on the treasure of our relationship with Christ rather than our earthly treasure (Matthew 6:21).

Conclusion

Many years ago, the builders of a proposed bridge across Niagara Falls had to figure out how to span the river with the suspension cables. The builders were able to get a thin string across by launching a simple kite. Using the string, they pulled a rope across, which was

followed by a thicker rope, then a small cable, and finally a cable heavy enough to use as support in building the bridge. When it was completed, the bridge was sturdy enough to support a train, but showed no signs of having once been launched by a simple kite!

Just like the construction of this bridge, being a good steward of our time, health, and money is a process. So we shouldn't worry if we don't master these

issues overnight. Rather we must focus on consistently making good choices, even if they are small at first. And when we trust the process, with God's help we will eventually become the stewards he wants us to be.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tyler Kraft is the current pastor of the Tracy Seventh-day Adventist Church, where he began serving in 2014. During his career, Tyler has served as a youth pastor, college chaplain, and lead pastor. He has bachelor degrees in theology and communication from Pacific Union College, a Master of Divinity degree from Andrews University, and is currently working on a Doctor of Ministry degree.

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Lynette Ecord, Marshall Gonzales,
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Editorial: **Bernard Castillo**

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The STEWPOT

A POTPOURRI OF PRACTICAL IDEAS to help you become a better steward

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TRUST THE PROCESS

BY TYLER KRAFT

A woman walked into her bathroom one morning to start getting ready for work. As she did, she discovered that her husband was already in the bathroom and was standing on the scale. She noticed that he was not simply on the scale, but he was sucking in his stomach. The woman thought to herself, "I know I didn't marry the smartest man in the world, but does he really think he's going to weigh less by sucking in his stomach?" So, the woman rather sarcastically informed her husband, "That's not going to help." Her husband looked at her and replied, "Sure it will. It's the only way I can see the numbers."

Losing weight is usually much easier to talk about than to actually do. If it was easy, there wouldn't be literally thousands of books, weight loss programs, exercise videos, and fad diets. All of these things exist to help people lose weight, but even the most scientifically questionable weight-loss regimen does not guarantee immediate results. They might promise quick results, but just as the weight gain wasn't immediate, the weight loss cannot be immediate either. The fact that results aren't instantaneous often causes frustration. Patience is required for any successful weight-loss plan because it's a process.

In a similar way, patience is required for getting positive results from practicing

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



good stewardship. If we were to go through a Bible study, or listen to a sermon, or read an article on the topic of Biblical stewardship, we would likely—if not certainly—find an explanation that there are divine blessings inherent to the practice of being a good steward. Yet these blessings usually take time to materialize because stewardship is a process.

Managing Our Time

Scripture is filled with counsel for us to manage our time wisely. One of the most colorful examples is found in Proverbs 6:6-8: “Go watch the ants, you lazy person. Watch what they do and be wise. Ants have no commander, no leader or ruler, but they store up food in the summer and gather their supplies at harvest.”

Obviously not everyone who has time management issues is lazy,

but God wants us to make the best use of the finite time we have. If we are unable to prioritize our schedule appropriately, we can miss out on having enough time with our loved ones, or spending quality time with God daily, or the rest and rejuvenation that the Sabbath brings. This is obviously to our detriment, which is why we are called to be good stewards of our time.

But, if time management is something we struggle

with, it is going to take a while to get it under proper management. We have to cultivate habits like keeping a calendar, and setting alarms and reminders, for example. Yet even when we develop these habits and get our time usage under control, we need to remember that the benefits won't be immediately apparent. It will be a process for our loved ones to realize that they can depend on us being there. It will be a process for our relationship with God to progress since relational bonds take time to deepen. It will be a process for us to experience the fruit of our good time management, but the results will be worth it.

Managing Our Health

Another point that the Bible makes clear is that God wants us to enjoy good health—both physical and mental. In John 10:10 Jesus said that he came so that we could have an abundantly full and satisfying life; and that is hard to experience if we are in poor health. We see through both Jesus' teachings and miracles that he worked to restore people's health.

While Jesus was able to heal people instantaneously, most of us know that improvements to our health usually take time. The rehabilitation that comes after an injury is a series of progressions. Lowering our cholesterol does not happen overnight. Properly dealing with depression or anxiety takes multiple visits to a therapist—and occasionally medication. And, as already mentioned, weight loss does not happen all at once.

It is evident that good health, generally speaking, requires us to consistently make wise choices. Obviously, this is easier said than done in many cases. It's easier to sit on the couch than use the treadmill. Eating chocolate cake is more appealing than a raw carrot. Keeping an appointment with a therapist takes more effort than playing a video game. But, when we develop and maintain healthy habits, we will reap the rewards—eventually.

Managing Our Money

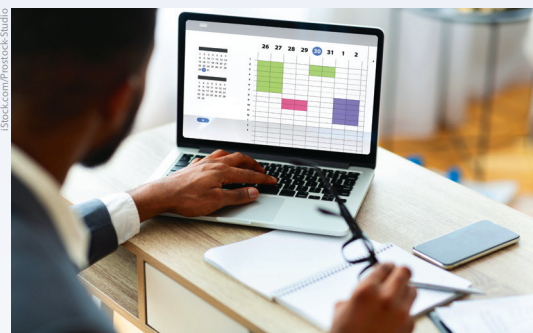
We read in Scripture that God cares about our finances. He isn't concerned about making all of his followers wealthy so much as he is concerned that we keep our focus on him and not our bank accounts. Jesus plainly says in Matthew 6:24, “You cannot serve both God and money.” To help keep our hearts in check, he asks us to return a tithe to him, as well as give other voluntary offerings.



Even though ten percent isn't much in the grand scheme of things, it's a lot to people who are already using 100 percent of their income. While it is clear that God expects ten percent of our income to be returned to him (e.g., Leviticus 27:30, Matthew 23:23), developing a tithing habit doesn't always happen immediately. Just like with our time and health, changes to the ways we manage our money is a process.

Many of us don't have a spare ten percent of our paycheck just laying around, so it takes some time to adjust to carving out that tithe—and that's okay. If we can only set aside three percent immediately, God is still going to appreciate and honor our

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