



STEWARDSHIP
REVIVAL WEEK

God First

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GOD FIRST
ADVENTIST STEWARDSHIP MINISTRIES





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Impossible Givers

Pr. Aniel Barbe

1 Kings 17:4–6. ⁴ And it will be that you shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there.”

⁵ So he went and did according to the word of the Lord, for he went and stayed by the Brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan.

⁶ The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening; and he drank from the brook.

One of the most famous biblical passages cited to encourage oneself and others to give is the text about the giving practices of the Macedonians and the praises they received from the apostle Paul. Their generosity is well described in these words: “That in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality” (2 Corinthians 8:2, NKJV). How was such lavish giving possible during a time of scarcity and when one’s resources are limited? They stand as examples of impossible givers!

As the apostle Paul introduces the Macedonians as an example of giving, he provides

a clear answer to the question “How was this possible?” This is very relevant for us today. We read in 2 Corinthians 8:1, “*Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia*” (NKJV). The capacity and willingness of the Macedonians to give was a “grace of God,” literally a gift from God. Paul employs the words *charis*, translated “*grace*,” no less than six times to speak about the privilege of participating in the collection or how God enables the believers to give (2 Corinthians 8:1, 6, 7, 9; 9:8, 14). The generosity of the Macedonian was activated neither from the inside nor from the outside, but from His side. Ellen White confirms this principle: The power to give comes from the One who invites us to give. Once the believer consecrates himself or herself to God, the propensity to give emerges naturally (2 Corinthians 8:5). They were transformed into the image of the Divine Giver.

Let us reflect on how God’s grace transforms the ravenous into regular givers during a time of scarcity.

Ravens Become Channel of Life

The Bible tells us how ravens were transformed into channels of life. This incident is reported in 1 Kings 17:4–6. It was a time of extended drought, causing a famine in the land of Israel. Elijah, the prophet of God, was ordered to go to Brook Cherith, an isolated place, and to hide there. Water was available from the brook, but the absence of dew and rain would rapidly cause all the edible plants to dry up. Food became a challenge. God had made provision for this situation in His wisdom: “I have commanded the ravens to feed you there.” (1 Kings 17:4, NKJV).

When God mentioned “ravens” during a time of drought, Elijah was sorely perplexed. Usually, ravens come to “*feed on*” animals and other creatures who die of hunger during a drought. Now God was saying the ravens won’t come to “*feed on*” your dead body but to “*feed you*” because of the order I gave them. God could have chosen a more kindhearted bird for this mission,

but he chose the ravens to be channels of life. Elijah knew what the book of Moses says about this bird which is often portrayed as a symbol of death. We read in Leviticus 11:13–15. “And these you shall regard as an abomination among the birds; they shall not be eaten, they are an abomination: the eagle, the vulture, the buzzard, the kite, and the falcon after its kind; every raven after its kind” (NKJV). Ravens are categorized with the eagle, vulture, and buzzard, the birds of prey which have a voracious appetite. Elijah was undoubtedly familiar with the incident when Noah sent out a raven who “kept going to and fro until the waters had dried up” (Genesis 8:7, NKJV). We can guess why, in contrast to the dove, the raven was happy to be outside the ark when the water was receding. It was a time for our raven to feast on the creatures destroyed by the Flood. As omnivores, they eat food of both plant and animal origin. This is the type of bird that God had commanded to serve as a channel of life.

Do you know that the six famous resident ravens of the Tower of London are fed daily with 170 kilograms of raw meats consisting of mice, chicks, rats, and assorted raw meats? As a special treat, they are given biscuits soaked in blood. Recently, the raven master had to dismiss one of the ravens, George, from the Tower because he was eating the television aerials. Our God has



a strange sense of humor, using ravens to feed His prophet! The ravens were impossible givers!

The Bible reports how the ravens responded to the command they received from God: “The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening; and he drank from the brook” (1 Kings 17:6, NKJV). In this passage, the writer highlights the constancy and regularity with which the ravens brought the food to Elijah. The brook dried up after some time, but the ravens did not stop being a channel of life until Elijah left the place. Interestingly, ravens don’t usually carry things on their feet as other prey birds; the meat and bread must have been in their beak or bill. Hence, these ravens could not avoid seeing, tasting, and smelling the food they were carrying to Elijah. There was indeed a constant temptation for the raven to divert the destination of the food to a different place or to an extra stomach. Ravens are known to be clever at stealing food and hiding food in secret places. However, the Bible text witnesses that the ravens were faithful even when they were unsure about their own subsistence after the special delivery. The service delivery of the ravens informs us that God transforms inside out. He can use impossible givers.

Should we end this reflection only with a *whoa* of amazement? Let us read Job 12:7 “*But now*

ask the beasts, and they will teach you; And the birds of the air, and they will tell you” (NKJV). If we could question the ravens, what would they tell us about them bringing food regularly to Elijah? As we end the Stewardship Revival Week of 2023, what can we learn from this short passage: “The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening.”

Our Calling vs. Our Nature

As God’s people, we have received an assignment similar to the one given to the ravens. We read in Malachi 3:10: “Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house” (NKJV). We are called to bring food to the house of God, not bread and meat but “all the tithes.” This passage’s context helps us understand that God is referring to the ten percent of our income and offerings.

The Bible also highlights the regularity with which believers must fulfill their assignment of bringing food. We read in Deuteronomy 16:17, “Every man *shall give* as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord your God which He has given you” (NKJV). This text does not refer to the ten percent tithe but to offerings. No one is asked to give more than what one has received or what one’s beak or bill could carry. However,

this text states a common principle that applies to all: “According to the blessing of the Lord your God which He has given you.” As you are blessed, you give and give in proportion to what you have received.

These instructions and commands from God filter through our human nature. The two often conflict with each other. While God commands giving and generosity, our natural inclination leads us in the opposite direction. Apostle Paul speaks about human self-centeredness in the well-known passage of 2 Timothy 3:1–5. There, he lists the 19 evil characteristics of the last days. His list starts with the expression “lovers of themselves,” *philautos* love directed to self and then mentions “lovers of money” as its first expression. William Barclay makes an interesting comment: “It is no accident that the first of these qualities will be a life that is centered in self. . . . Love of self is the basic sin, from which all others flow.” Self-centeredness is at the essence of our identity. We are impossible givers. Paradoxically, the God who knows us perfectly commands us to become giving channels. Our situation resembles strangely to the assignment given to the ravens in Elijah’s story. Fortunately, God applies the exact solution to us as with the ravens; He transforms inside out.

Growing as an Impossible Giver

The transformation from a voracious to a generous being is not confined to the raven's species. The Bible provides some mind-boggling examples of the change of self-centered individuals into extravagant givers. Two foremost examples are the widow who fed Elijah and Zacchaeus, the tax collector.

After Elijah left the Brook Cherith, God guided him to a place called Zarephath in the region of Sidon. At the town gate, Elijah met a widow who was gathering sticks. Following God's instructions, the prophet asked the woman for water and then for a piece of bread. This request destabilized the woman, and she replied to Elijah: "As surely as the Lord your God lives, ' she replied, 'I don't have any bread—only a handful of flour in a jar and a little olive oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it—and die'" (2 Kings 17:12, NIV). Her answer reveals her self-preservation instinct. She wanted to make the most of the little resources she had for herself and her son, even if it was a last meal. Her response was both natural and legitimate.

However, the story does not end with a refusal but reveals a shift from the self-preservation





mindset. The widow finally chose to use what she had to prepare food for Elijah. With hindsight, we congratulate the widow for her wise course of action. Her action led to a miracle. However, on that day, when she returned home to prepare and deliver the food to Elijah, the benefits of her actions were not clear to her. Where did she find the strength, faith, and audacity to give first and then use what was leftover for herself and her son?

The next account comes from Luke 19, the story of the Zacchaeus. He was of Jewish origin, but he decided to collaborate with the Romans, the ruling power of the day, to make a living, a good living. He was not only collecting his dues for services rendered, but, through extortions and other means, he was gratifying his craving for more. As a result, Zacchaeus was treated as a traitor to his people and excluded from the social and religious community. He accepted his status as persona non grata because pursuing material possessions was his life's dominant purpose. Interestingly, at some point, the same Zacchaeus would make a solemn statement that does not reflect his natural inclination: "Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, 'Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold'" (Luke

19:8, NKJV). He is speaking about giving and reimbursing instead of collecting and holding tight to his wallet. Is this a case of split personality?

Zacchaeus has undergone an inside-out transformation, as with the ravens. We read about the explanation given by Jesus in Luke 19:9: "Today salvation has come to this house" (NKJV). Jesus redeemed him from his natural inclination. The greediest man in Jericho could now behave as the most generous man in the city. An impossible giver was born on that day. God can perform the same transformation in us who are called to bring food into the storehouse.

Apostle Paul describes how the Macedonians were turned into impossible givers: "And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us" (2 Corinthians 8:5, NIV). What God requires from us may not always be easy or natural; giving an offering after returning tithe, giving an offering in proportion to the income we receive, giving the best as offering. It is often beyond human expectations, requiring some additional strength, which we seem not to have. The Macedonians, while struggling with life challenges, "gave themselves first of all to the Lord," and the Lord intervened for them and through them. The good news is God's Spirit empowers and transforms us from the inside out.

God can turn each of us into impossible givers, irrespective of our biological and social inclinations, by renewing our mind. Believers should not be discouraged by the gap between their natural selves and God's expectations in all areas, including giving. You can become an impossible giver. He transforms anyone who "gave themselves first of all to the Lord" into channels

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to bring food to His house. Furthermore, He makes our giving regular and systematic, as we are blessed, not only prompted by events or our good mood. Finally, He grows us into partners in His final mission. Let us pray daily for the grace of giving.



Pr. Aniel Barbe

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My Commitment

To DEDICATE a percentage
(____%) of my income as a regular
OFFERING to the Lord.



Arabic commitment card titled 'الله أولاً' (Allah First). It contains 10 numbered promises in Arabic, such as 'I will set apart the first moments of each day to commune with the Lord through prayer, the study of the Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy and the Sabbath School lessons, and to FEAR GOD.' It includes a signature line and a date field.

Bengali commitment card titled 'পথিলে পরমেশ্বৰ' (Pathile Parameshwar). It contains 10 numbered promises in Bengali, such as 'I will set apart the first moments of each day to commune with the Lord through prayer, the study of the Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy and the Sabbath School lessons, and to FEAR GOD.' It includes a signature line and a date field.

Bislama commitment card titled 'GOD FESTAEM MI PROMES:'. It contains 10 numbered promises in Bislama, such as 'I will set apart the first moments of each day to commune with the Lord through prayer, the study of the Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy and the Sabbath School lessons, and to FEAR GOD.' It includes a signature line and a date field.

Chinese commitment card titled '上帝至上' (Shangdi Zhi Shang) and '我承諾:'. It contains 10 numbered promises in Chinese, such as 'I will set apart the first moments of each day to commune with the Lord through prayer, the study of the Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy and the Sabbath School lessons, and to FEAR GOD.' It includes a signature line and a date field.

Dutch commitment card titled 'GOD EERST IK BELOOF:'. It contains 10 numbered promises in Dutch, such as 'Ik zal de eerste momenten van elke dag APART TE ZETTEN om door gebed, de Bijbel te bestuderen, de Geest van Propheeten en de Sabbat School lessen te leren, en om GOD EERST te vrezen.' It includes a signature line and a date field.

English commitment card titled 'GOD FIRST I PROMISE:'. It contains 10 numbered promises in English, such as 'I will set apart the first moments of each day to commune with the Lord through prayer, the study of the Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy and the Sabbath School lessons, and to FEAR GOD.' It includes a signature line and a date field.

Farci commitment card titled 'تیلو وارداخ' (Tilowaradax). It contains 10 numbered promises in Farci, such as 'I will set apart the first moments of each day to commune with the Lord through prayer, the study of the Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy and the Sabbath School lessons, and to FEAR GOD.' It includes a signature line and a date field.

Fijian commitment card titled 'NA KALOU ME LIU NOQU YALAYALA:'. It contains 10 numbered promises in Fijian, such as 'I will set apart the first moments of each day to commune with the Lord through prayer, the study of the Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy and the Sabbath School lessons, and to FEAR GOD.' It includes a signature line and a date field.

Fijian Hindi commitment card titled 'PARNESHWAR PAHELE MAI WAADA KARTA HUN:'. It contains 10 numbered promises in Fijian Hindi, such as 'I will set apart the first moments of each day to commune with the Lord through prayer, the study of the Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy and the Sabbath School lessons, and to FEAR GOD.' It includes a signature line and a date field.

Fijian Hindi Devanagari commitment card titled 'परमेश्वर पहले मैं वादा (प्रतिज्ञा) करता हूँ:'. It contains 10 numbered promises in Fijian Hindi Devanagari, such as 'I will set apart the first moments of each day to commune with the Lord through prayer, the study of the Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy and the Sabbath School lessons, and to FEAR GOD.' It includes a signature line and a date field.

ENGLISH

FARCI

FIJIAN

FIJIAN HINDI

FIJIAN HINDI DEVANAGARI

NA KALOU ME LIU

NOQU YALAYALA:

- SOU NA GAUNA ni veifalanoa ki Jisu me mefa ai ni ka nu yadra mai ena veinga.
- Keru Jisu me vaka ai me **VCOSITI** ia ka **LOMANI** ia na fani baleta e sega ni dau ruarua.
- Digita mai **VARAKAU** ni **KULA** a **VINAKA** me ruu ni rogoa vialeka kua na dono ni Kalou.
- WSEI** Jisu vei ia na moqo icaba ko na moqo mefaveve.
- Oketa na **SIGA** ni **VINACEGEGU** me vesivi dovovo meu vakavevaki au kana vakavevaki.
- Yalo dina meu **VARAKUSA** moa i **KATINI** na Kalou e 10% me na ka kece au ruveta ka sola **TUKUGA** vei au.
- YALAKA** e vica na pasede (___ %) mai na ka au ruveta me moqo i soliso'i Tode.

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

FUATA TRANSLATION FOR KEY

STEWARDSHIP MINISTRIES

CHILDREN FIJIAN

PARMESHWAAR PAHALA

MERA VAADA:

- Rox subha jab main jagu sab se pahale Yeshu se bafe karoon aur unke saath **SAMAY BITAON**.
- Yeshu se maang karoon ki mujhe madad kare, main **CHAKI** kar sakta aur ek doosare se **PREEM** karoon kyunki ye kaffin hote hai.
- SWASTHAMAY** **ADARON** ko chunoon faaki main Ishwar ke avasth sun sakoon !
- Har ek dost aur parivar ko Yeshu ke Vishay mein **BATAOON**.
- Hamesha Fayaz raboon **VISRRAAMADIN** ko aur Khata bastane ke liye.
- Jo kuch aamadenee Prabhu mujhe **PAHALA** deta hai, main aawaazdaree se **DASAVAN (HSS)** use **LAUTAIN**, jo 10% hai.
- YEH VAADI** hai, mere aamadenee ka Prasthuti (___ %) hamesha ka bharf hogai!

PRABHU KE MADATHI SAATH _____ SARREKHI _____

FUATA TRANSLATION FOR KEY

STEWARDSHIP MINISTRIES

CHILDREN FIJIAN HINDI

PRIMEIRO DEUS

MEU PACTO:

- PASSAR ALGUM TEMPO** conversando com Jesus quando eu acordar.
- Peço a Jesus para me ajudar a **PERDOAR** e **AMAR** os outros, pois pode ser realmente difícil.
- Escolher **HÁBITOS SAUDÁVEIS** para ouvir claramente a voz de Deus.
- CONTAR** a todos os meus amigos e familiares sobre Jesus.
- Tornar o **SÁBADO** ainda mais especial preparando-me.
- DEVOLVER** fielmente o **DÍZIMO** que pertence a Deus, y que é 10% de qualquer renda que Ele me DER.
- PROMETO** uma porcentagem (___ %) da minha renda como oferta regular.

COM A AJUDA DE DEUS: _____ DATA: _____

MORDOMIA CRISTÁ

CHILDREN PORTUGUESE

FAAMUAMUA LE ATUA

OU TE TAUTINO ATU:

- FAALU SE TAIMI** e falanoa ni ia lesu pe a ou ala i faeao uma.
- Valaau ia lesu e fesosomai mai ia fe au ia ou **FAAMALOLO** mai **ALOKA** i isi ona e mafai ona avee o se mea fiafia.
- Fafai se **MASANGA FALESORUA MALOLOMI** ma ia mafai ona ou faalogo i le saifoga o le Atua.
- TAU** atu i au ou uma ma aiga lesu.
- Matua se le faafitua i le **SAPATI** e ala i le fafesoanga.
- Famoso e toe faafai le sefula'i a le Atua o (10%) i soo se fomaoga ou te mavae ma ia **AMAI** fauina mai ia fe au.
- Ou te **TAUTINO ATU** se pasene e (___ %) o le fomaoga ou te mavae e fau ma a'u Tautiagi i soo uma.

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

FUATA TRANSLATION FOR KEY

STEWARDSHIP MINISTRIES

CHILDREN SAMOAN

PRIMERO DIOS

MI PACTO:

- PASA TEMPO** hablando con Jesús la primera vez que despertar (fies los dias).
- Pido a Jesús que me ayude a **PERDONAR** y **AMAR** a los demás porque puede ser realmente difícil.
- ESGAR** un nuevo **HÁBITO SALUDABLE**, para poder escuchar la voz de Dios.
- Dile** a todos mis amigos y familiares cerca de Jesús.
- Haz que el **SÁBADO** sea aún más especial preparándote.
- DEVOLVER** fielmente el **DÍZIMO** que es el 10% de cualquier ingreso **EL PRIMERO** me da a mí.
- DESCAR** un porcentaje regular de mis ingresos (___ %) como una ofrenda al Señor (ofert).

MIOS MEMANTE: _____ FECHA: _____

MAYORDOMÍA CRISTIANA

CHILDREN SPANISH

KO E 'OTUA KE MU'OMU'A

KO E TALA'OFA:

- FAKAMOLEKI HA TAIMI** ke talanoa kua Sisu i ho'fo'fua 'i hake i he 'aho kotoape.
- Kole ki he 'Otua ke tokoni'i au keu **FAKAMOLEMOLE** i mo 'OFA ki he ni'ihii kehe ko'e'uhii pa he 'oku ngali' fangitara.
- Fili ha **TO'ONGA MO'UI LELEI** keu lava i fa'ango ki he le'o 'e 'e 'Otua.
- TALA** ki he ngaahi maheni mo e famili fekau'aki mo Sisu.
- Ngaohi e **SAPATE** ke to e mahulu ange 'eme mavahe 'aki ho'o teuteu ki ai.
- Fautotou i he **FAKAPOKI** 'a e **VAVE** **HONGOFULU** ki he 'Otua 'i ba ko e 10% i he kotoa mo e palanga ho'i mai 'oku ke matu mei he me'a kuo ne foaki mai ki'ate ko'e.
- TALA'OFA** ha peseti (___ %) 'e pa'ango 'oku ke matu ko ho'o me'a'ofa tu'upau.

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

FUATA TRANSLATION FOR KEY

POTUNGAUETAUHI

CHILDREN TONGAN



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