Happy New Year

Scripture is replete with examples of newness. We are called to newness of life. Baptism is a symbol that we have accepted God’s gift in making us new creatures. He promises to give us new hearts of flesh to replace our old hearts of stone. And the promise for the future is that God will make “all things new.” As we enter this New Year, 2015, we wish for you and yours a new and fresh experience with your Lord. May each day, each step draw you closer to Him in an adventure of faith.

Top Content for 2014
We love all the great stories and articles that come into the Gleaner, but some stories just rise to the top! In 2014, we had some great stories and media that people kept going back to. What was your favorite from 2014? Write us on Facebook and let us know what story you loved, and why.

Top Articles
1. Accidental Pagans
2. Ten Free Ways to Appreciate Your Pastor ... Without Making It Awkward
3. Here Are Your 2015 General Conference Delegates
4. Donald Leroy Gray: An exceptional life of service to God
5. Graduate Earns Second WWU Degree 75 Years After First
6. World Church Shelves The Record Keeper
7. 2014 Northwest Camp Meeting Schedule
8. World Church TOSC Considers Division Reports
9. I’m Offended, Part 1
10. I’m Offended, Part 2

Top Media:
1. Brewster Adventist School Near Escape
2. MGAES Students Produce Original Music Video
3. My Alaska with Ken Crawford – Episode 12
4. Bestseller: The Clifford Goldstein Story
5. The Truth About Death
6. History Highlight: Adventists save the life of John F. Kennedy
7. Christmas Truce
8. A Matter Of Conscience
9. Did you know that God wants us to take care of all that He has given us?
10. Called to Serve

Top Features:

1. The Record Keeper: A New Window into The Great Controversy
2. Persecuted
3. Courage to Stand
4. Christ's Method Alone: Montana State Campus Ministry
5. Forever Faithful International Pathfinder Camporee

Do you enjoy GleanerWeekly? Don't keep it to yourself. Forward it to a friend and share!

Currently at gleanernow

- More Than Money by Seth Pierce
- Dysfunctional Family' Helps Raise $200,000
- PAA Students Excel in Spanish
- Woodland Celebrates 289 Years
- Sunnyside Welcomes New Pastor

And More!

Looking Ahead

January

- 1: New Years Day
- 7–17: Ten Days of Prayer
- 30–31: Center for Bible, Faith, and Mission Seminar, Portland, OR

More Events Online
InPrint

January

School is about more than just gaining book-knowledge. Walla Walla University and the University Church are partnering to train and equip students with practical skills that will help them become integral members of NPUC churches when they graduate. Find out more in the January issue of the Gleaner.
More Than Money

This past November I attended a Dave Ramsey conference in Nashville, Tenn., that really messed up my theology. For the uninitiated: Dave Ramsey is a bestselling author, world-renowned speaker and teacher on the subject of stewardship. I know, boring right?

Most of us would rather hear sermons on the book of Chronicles than be tortured by an annual stewardship sermon series in January — reminding us all of how our greedy materialism got the better of us during the holiday shopping spree that never should have happened.

Part of the problem lies in our definition of stewardship and the abysmal ways we have tried to cram it down the throats of the faithful during the offering call or annual business meeting. Many of our materials and presentations have been myopic — making stewardship all about money. It is so much more than that — stewardship is everything.

From the outset of our meetings, Dave made it clear that stewardship is not fundraising. It may include that at times, but the equation of biblical stewardship with a call for financing various projects is theologically anemic — and annoying. Going further, the idea that stewardship is only about money and church budgets, and even personal budgets, also falls abysmally short of the biblical concept.

Restricting stewardship to financial matters is like saying The Count of Monte Cristo is about a rich guy — the themes and nuances are so much more complex than money.

Jesus gives the foundational teaching on stewardship when He says, “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money” (Matt. 6:24). Wait … I thought you said this wasn’t about money!

Lies!

Calm down — what most translations render as money actually involves so much more. Other Bible versions use the word “mammon.” While I am sure a few people reading this might include mammon in their daily vocabulary at school, the grocery store or gas station — most of us don’t.

Seriously, can you imagine the following?

“Would you like any mammon back?”

“We accept mammon or check.”

“Show me the mammon!”

Not to mention mammon trees and mammon burning holes in people’s pockets.

Within ancient Jewish writings “mammon,” from the Greek mamonas, denotes resources or dishonest gain. However the word is older than that — possibly coming from an Aramaic noun that means “that in which one trusts.”[1] Well, that’s different.

So in this passage Jesus tell us we cannot trust in Him and other stuff. We can’t ultimately trust in our money, our good works, our status, our education, our addictions — or we will end up hating God. This isn’t about money; this is about what we look to in life to function. Stewardship is learning to dedicate ourselves, and everything that makes up ourselves, to Jesus.

As I have been wrestling with stewardship theology in recent sermons at church, I have wondered if the purpose of
stewardship goes even beyond managing my life and is really about protecting the image of God.

We are made in God's image in order to reflect God's glory[2] — but when my heart is seduced by other stuff, suddenly my priorities rearrange and my life becomes dedicated to acquiring whatever it is I feel I need to function.[3] With Jesus out of view, I no longer care about the purpose of His creation — creation becomes a means to achieve my own skewed purposes.

Suddenly, I am a servant to whatever “mammon” (wealth, status, beauty, cookies) I feel I need to live — willing to do whatever it takes to acquire what I feel I need. Instead of my heart finding rest and value as a child of God, it becomes an insatiable beast willing to devour whatever stands in the way of success — even people.

If I become willing to devour people on the way to my own warped definition of success, then not only do I lose the image of a loving God in my life but I strip it from others by using them as “things” instead of recognizing them as created beings bearing the same image. Failing stewardship leads to a loss of humanity.

From here stewardship expands to so many potential theological avenues. We can explore stewardship and social justice — how we use our resources affects those who don’t have any. Stewardship and Sabbath fit well together — reminding us we are worth more than we make, not to mention that we did not make the world and therefore don’t own it. The theme of freedom matches stewardship as it can speak to releasing people from the consequences of debt, poor decision-making and oppressive cultures.

As we seek to reclaim and explore biblical stewardship with all its practical implications and theological themes, may God help us leave a legacy that inspires others to put their trust in Who matters most — not what matters least.


+ Read more from Perspective

+ Read more from January 2015
With the prospects of winter storms and high winds, the morning of Nov. 13, 2014, dawned with uncertainty: To what extent would a dysfunctional "family" be able to help raise the needed funds by late that evening? In answer to many prayers, the evening of the annual fundraising event for Columbia Adventist Academy (CAA) in Battle Ground, Wash., saw only a dusting of snow and light winds. This was only the beginning though.

The event, themed “A Heart for Thanksgiving” and benefitting the worthy student fund, began with a devotional thought by David Smith, Meadow Glade Church youth pastor, and music by Cierra Saur, a CAA junior. Thanksgiving dinner complete with stuffing, cranberries, mashed potatoes, and pumpkin and chocolate desserts was enjoyed by those who had committed to being present no matter the weather.

Immediately following dinner, the Stratton Half Brothers took the center (and only) stage. This dysfunctional “family” of three soon had everyone laughing, tapping toes, humming along as familiar songs were sung, and asking each other if Susan Loor, CAA registrar, really was an “old college flame” of Milford Stratton, the half-brother most in need of dental and eye care.

Keynote speaker Whitaker Gladden, CAA alumnus, quickly moved those present from laughter to tears as he shared his story of how someone had paid for him to attend CAA. He told how elated he was to hear the news, and shared stories of teachers and students who impacted his life in a positive way, including one student in particular, Janessa Rogers, who is now known as Janessa Gladden, his wife.

One of the attendees that evening said, “You would have to have a very hard heart not to sacrifice to give something after that testimony to Christian education.” There were no hard hearts there though, as everyone pulled together to give a record amount to assure that no child is deprived of the gift of Christian education at CAA. And that’s how a dysfunctional family helped raise more than $200,000. God is always good, but sometimes He surprises us in big ways.

Larry Hiday

CAA Gleaner correspondent
Portland Adventist Academy (PAA) students excel in the Spanish language.

Five PAA students were recently recognized for achievement in the Spanish language and inducted into the Sociedad Honoraria Hispánica, a national honor society for Spanish students. They are the first members of PAA's newly formed Chapter of the Sociedad Honoraria Hispánica (SHH), which is sponsored by The American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese (AATSP). Several more Spanish II students are expected to be inducted into the SHH early in 2015.

To PAA Spanish teacher Rita Barrett, the required two years of Spanish class is an opportunity to inspire and motivate students to be lifelong language learners. “I realized that if students enroll in Spanish as freshmen, I could have them for four full years,” says Barrett. “They could potentially be fluent when they graduate.”

To reach that goal, several years ago, Barrett began offering a Spanish III course. This year she was able to achieve her next goal to not only offer a Spanish IV course but to also charter a new chapter of the SHH. While students in Spanish IV and the SHH aren’t earning credit, they are acquiring proficiency that will serve them well throughout their lives.

Senior Blashishin, PAA’s SHH president, was not originally interested in Spanish as a freshman. “I was intimidated,” says Blashishin, “but I was also still curious. Then after a couple of weeks, I realized I was making progress. I just hadn’t anticipated it would be so learnable.”

Blashishin, as well as other students and young alumni, credit Barrett’s teaching style. “There are no textbooks in her class,” says Blashishin. “It’s a storytelling way of teaching, and it’s an organic way of learning a language.”

“It’s effective because she incorporates music, stories and culture while teaching Spanish,” says young PAA alumna Carmella Rosu. “She helped me to form a solid foundation for learning Spanish.”

“My goal for our students is language proficiency,” says Barrett. “That means we don’t get caught up in letter grades and tests. We speak to each other in Spanish.”

The proof is in. PAA young alumni are succeeding in Spanish and are demonstrating what it means to be lifelong language learners.

Rosu, a former student of Barrett’s who is fluent in two languages and working on a third, was able to pass the Spanish College Level Examination Program (CLEP) and skip two semesters of college-level Spanish. This year, she is studying Spanish at Sagunto Adventist College in Spain. Three other recent graduates have also passed CLEP tests.

“I am going to try to generate more interest in the CLEP,” says Barrett, “and boost student confidence that they can do this. Because I know all of the SHH students could pass it.”

Barrett continues to set goals for her department. “We are going to apply to become a CLEP testing center,” she says. “That will help me push students to take the test before they are away from PAA and my classes.”

But her ultimate goal is inspiring students to broaden their world. That can’t be measured by a grade but through the lives of her current and former students.

“I want to keep learning languages the rest of my life,” says Rosu. “Learning other languages is a way to learn more about different cultures and ways of life. How cool is it when you have three languages to express yourself in? I like
that it opens up so many opportunities. You're able to communicate with people that you wouldn't have been able to. It shows people that you care when you try to communicate in their native language."
Woodland Celebrates 289 Years

The Woodland Community Center in Woodland, Wash., was filled with celebration as birthdays totaling 289 years came together.

Lavina Bliss (left) is 99. Marian Crozier, a Woodland Church member, is 101. Martha Ferguson, Lavina’s sister, is the youngest of the group at age 90. And Charles Ferguson, brother-in-law to Martha, will be 99 soon.

Martha’s children — Arlene Wing, Flora Campbell, Marilyn Sutton, Carolyn Piekarek and Lyle Ferguson — were all on hand to help celebrate their mother’s 90th birthday.

Norma Brunson
Woodland Church member
Sunnyside Welcomes New Pastor

Sunnyside Church members were happy to welcome Vorial Negoi as their new pastor on Nov. 22, 2014. After almost 19 years with their previous pastor, Larry Mays, the church family is looking forward to another era of working together with Negoi to do the will of God in the Sunnyside, Wash., area.