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rich. Some have argued that wealth management is not listed in 1 Corinthians 12. That's true, but neither is singing, and we all believe that is a talent from God.

Another example of wealth management is found in the parable of the bags of gold (Matthew 25:14-30). Three different servants received a different amount of gold to take care of while the master was

traveling. The first two servants multiplied the gold they received, but the third one didn't know what to do with it. He didn't spend or misuse it; he didn't do anything. We could say he didn't have the gift of managing the gold he received.

So why does God request a tithe? I think we can all agree that He does not need the money. I believe this is exactly what we need to understand.

Tithing – giving to God 10 percent of everything that we receive – is not about money. It's about obedience. It's about accepting what He is asking from us without questioning why. He wants us to depend on Him 100 percent, not on our jobs, savings, or the lottery. He wants to supply ALL of our needs, so we will not be afraid of our present and future.

Be obedient to God with your tithe, trust Him, and if you have any doubts, He has given us permission to test Him. "Test me in this," He says, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it." So, go ahead and try it!

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#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Eduardo Gonzalez was proudly born and raised in Costa Rica. He has two grown sons, one lovely daughter-in-law, and has been married for over 30 years. He and his wife recently relocated from

southern California to the beautiful Pacific Northwest, where he is regional director of operations for a long-term care company based out of Yakima, WA.

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# The STEWPOT

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

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## TESTING GOD

BY EDUARDO GONZALEZ

Throughout the Bible, God has given us many promises. However, every single one of His promises is conditional. Let's take, for example, tithe.

A tithe is a request from God to give Him 10 percent of everything that we receive. Many believe that His request is like a tax or unfair demand, but – in my opinion – those who believe this have not yet experienced the blessing God is trying to give us.

In the biblical days, what people received was not measured in money. They got cows, sheep, and seasonal crops. Today our economy is very different. Most of us work, and from the salary that we collect, we return our tithe.

The best known promise about tithe is Malachi 3:10: "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that

there will not be room enough to store it" (NIV). Let's break this promise down into several parts:

**Bring the whole tithe** – Notice what the promise is saying: God is expecting a FULL 10 percent – not nine, eight, or even 9.99. If we



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

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want to receive the blessing of His promise, we either give everything or nothing.

**That there may be food in my house** – Here is the condition to the promise. For us to have food in our house, we must bring the whole tithe to His house.

The Spirit of Prophecy shows us that one of GOD's financial plans is for us to participate in what is called "systematic benevolence." In short, systematic benevolence is when we give God His tithe (10%) on a regular basis, and an additional percentage as an offering, for example, 10% tithe and 5% or 10% as a love offering. Notice God's promise regarding systematic benevolence. *Testimonies for the Church 3:404, 405* says:

*"Our heavenly Father did not originate the plan of systematic benevolence to enrich Himself, but to be a great blessing to man. He saw that this system of beneficence was just what man needed."*

Someone can argue that this does not make any sense since many individuals do not return their tithe to God and much less, participate in systematic benevolence, yet still have food in their house. That sounds

like a good argument; however, the promise goes further than today's meal. Let me give you a personal experience.

In 2001, my wife and I were given the opportunity to purchase a business. A few years after buying it, our company tripled in size; we were doing very well financially. In December 2009, we lost a lawsuit, and very quickly the problems increased. Our bank removed our extensive lines of credit; we had to use our savings to pay our employees and purchase the supplies needed to continue running the business; our company and personal bills started to pile up. For almost a year, we did not receive any salary. The situation was so bad that in December 2010, our two boys offered their

savings so we could pay our mortgage, and with all the shame as the breadwinner, I had to accept that offer and take their money.

God demonstrated His tithe promise to my family and me. During this devastating time, not once did we find ourselves without any food. Our pantry and refrigerator were full and even at times contained some luxury items such as ice cream. Many times my wife and I questioned where the food was coming from. We had no money, but yet we always had food. This was happening with clothing as well. The kids continued growing, and yet we never had to



"During this devastating time, not once did we find ourselves without any food."



buy them new shoes, socks, t-shirts, or pants.

During that time, I learned that God was fulfilling His tithing promise to us.

**And see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.** When reading this portion of His promise, many believe "open the floodgates of heaven" means that if we give God our tithe, He will make us rich. However, God is not saying that tithing is a business transaction or like winning the lottery. What He is saying is that all of our needs will be supplied – not a little bit, but in abundance. That is why He is using the term "food" (a fundamental human need).

To prove my point, let me use another biblical example, found in 1 Kings 17. A widow had just enough food for one more meal for herself and her son, and she expected to sit there and wait until they died. Elijah visited, asked her to give him some bread, and gave her a promise from God. "For this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'The jar of flour will not be used up, and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the Lord sends rain on the land'" (verse 14, *NIV*). Could God have given her a new house, a job, a new husband, or just made her rich? Yes, of course, but her need was food, and it was given to her in abundance.

You may be asking yourself, "If I am faithful to God with tithe, why am I not rich?" Many Bible heroes were very wealthy, including Job, Abraham, David, and Solomon – just to name a few. God can bestow riches if He chooses to do so. The problem is that most of us are not capable of handling lots of wealth, and that is by God's design.

Paul gives us insight about this in 1 Corinthians 12:4: "There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them" (*NIV*). The gift to correctly manage a large amount of money (wealth) has to be given by the Spirit. God does not intend for everyone to be wealthy; otherwise, He would have given this talent to everyone, and we'd all be

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