



We have people who seem to come upon our church by chance and we have those who have been searching for truth for years. But then, we also have those in the church who don't appreciate the true value—and the cost—of what is right before us.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Marvin Wray is semi-retired after 43 years of full time ministry and is serving in his third position as interim pastor, currently in Chico, Calif. He and his bride, Ingrid, will soon celebrate 50 years of blessed marriage. They have three grown children, five perfect grandchildren, and two awesome great grandsons. They live in Grass Valley, Calif.

Distributed by:
Portuguese Union of
SDA Churches
Director: Fernando Ferreira

Produced by:
Pacific Union Conference
Stewardship Department
Design: Stephanie Leal
Editorial: Bernard Castillo

through her, found the calling—the treasure—which God was still offering me.

But now, even after 47 years of ministry, I find that I need to continually present my body as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God. I need to not be conformed to the world, but be transformed (changed, converted) by the renewing of my mind (paraphrase of

Romans 12:1-2).

So, we see in these two short stories that stewardship is not about what percentage of our means, our time, and our talents we should be willing to give. True stewardship is a total surrender of all we have and all we are.

The treasure is there for the taking. It is free and it can never be taken from us, but we must surrender everything we have in order to make it our own.

Is it worth it? Oh my, the value is out of this world!

The STEWPOT

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

APRIL 2021 • VOLUME 26, ISSUE 4

WHAT WE CANNOT LOSE: STEWARDSHIP OF TREASURE

BY MARVIN WRAY

Let me begin this editorial by simply saying how much I have appreciated “The Stewpot” and how much I miss Gordon Botting, who started the publication over 25 years ago [sadly, Botting passed away in July 2019]. Gordon gave all he had to the ministry God set before him and he always portrayed that he was doing it with a glad heart. That glad heart and total commitment were the clear messages of stewardship which Jesus emphasized in two of His parables.

I love the approach that Matthew takes as he talks about the “kingdom of heaven.” He is the only one of the four gospel writers who uses this phrase; the others talk about the “kingdom of God.” They are all talking about the same thing, but Matthew was writing primarily for the Jews and they were very particular about the use of God’s name. I love that! Are we as careful and considerate when we engage others to not use names, phrases, acronyms, or titles that may either offend or confuse those we are trying to reach?

Jesus used the phrase “kingdom of heaven” more than thirty times in Matthew’s gospel and there are ten parables telling us what that kingdom is like. While all of those stories are short, there are two that take only a total of three verses combined, yet they tell us a great deal about stewardship.



iStock.com/allanswart

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



iStock.com/franckreporter

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field” (Matthew 13:44, NIV).

When the average church member thinks of stewardship, they think of tithes and offerings. If they go beyond that they may think also of making sure a generous part of their time and talents are used in service to God. Let’s listen to Jesus’ stories.

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field” Matthew 13:44 (NIV).

He follows that with what, at first, seems to be a variation of the same thought.

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it” (Matthew 13:45-46, NIV).

While these two very short stories do, obviously, contain similarities, they also contain some very distinct concepts for both seekers and sharers of the gospel.

In the first story, the man seems to simply stumble upon the treasure, and upon recognizing its value he sells everything he has to obtain the right to secure it.

Now, we could overanalyze the story and talk about his other two options; he could have notified the owner of the treasure since he owned the land, or he could have simply picked up the treasure and gone on his way with it.

But perhaps the original landowner represents those who have been in the church for years, but don’t really recognize the value of the treasure it holds. And the second option might represent those who

grasp at the treasure, but aren’t willing to give anything for it.

The man, while apparently not searching for treasure, immediately recognized its value once he saw it and was willing to give everything he had to obtain it. In referring to his “joy” we can only assume that, like the individuals in the series of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son in Luke 15, this man was going to throw a party to celebrate and share his joy.

In the second story we have a man who was deliberately looking for pearls of great value and suddenly he discovered one that took his breath away and he was willing to sell his entire inventory and all that he had to obtain that one prize. I have no doubt that, having found this great treasure, he excitedly showed it to those he associated with who were also seeking pearls of great value.

To be sure, there are those who seem to “stumble” upon the treasure of eternal life and suddenly their lives are transformed as they leave old ways behind and joyfully engage a new and abundant life.

There are others who have been diligently seeking spiritual truth and meaning. Suddenly they see the reality of the true treasure that is before them and they surrender all for that which cannot be taken from them.

I love this quote by Jim Elliot, one of the five missionaries killed on the Amazon River by the people he was trying to reach. He said, “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.”

Certainly the two men Jesus told us about were no fools, although I have no doubt that many thought they were unwise to sell everything they had for a single treasure.

We have people who seem to come upon our church by chance and we have those who have been searching for truth for years. But then, we also have those in the church who don’t appreciate the true value—and the cost—of what is right before us.

The original landowner didn’t know what he had in his own field. The original owner of the pearl of “great value” evidently didn’t know that it was worth everything one could own.

My life is a combination of all three possibilities. I grew up in a church setting and felt God’s call, but walked away for many years while haunted by the memory of what I had always felt God wanted for me. Later, I “stumbled” into a woman, who is now my wife of almost fifty years, and,



iStock.com/spxChrome

In the second story we have a man who was deliberately looking for pearls of great value and suddenly he discovered one that took his breath away and he was willing to sell his entire inventory and all that he had to obtain that one prize.