MONEY
Stewarding Our Father’s Resources
When an American Christian began training pastors on Mt. Elgon in Kenya about ten years ago, one local man there was outraged. He got up in the face of this believer, a DTS graduate, and threatened his life.

A few years later, hundreds of Kenyans fled Mt. Elgon, crossing into Uganda to get away from fighting. A war on the mountain over its natural resources caused almost all of its inhabitants to lose their homes. When the locals finally returned, they had nothing. But this was the land of their ancestors. How could they move away?

Hearing about the plight of the Christians there, generous believers across the world gave funds to rebuild thirty single-room homes for their brothers and sisters, entrusting its well-trained pastors with the job of discerning who should receive the money. And some of these godly leaders went without houses for themselves in order to provide homes for those in greater need. One such person in need was the man who had made threats. And the Christians’ gesture of love shown to one who had demonstrated such hatred softened his heart to their message, and he trusted Christ. Another man, a recent convert who received a house for himself and his eight children, offered his home as a church meeting place for his village’s other new converts.

Tradition tells us that Martin Luther once said, “There are three conversions a person needs to experience: The conversion of the head, the conversion of the heart, and the conversion of the pocketbook.” Certainly, of all people, Luther knew this. Part of the content of his 95 Theses nailed to Wittenberg’s door was a corrective against the church’s handling of money chests and indulgences—rooted in greed. What a contrast to the generous pastors on Mt. Elgon!

The Bible has much to say on the topic of money. Nearly half of Jesus’s parables include words such as rich, poor, mammon, coins, inheritance, mite, and tax collector. God’s Word contains more than four times as many verses about money as it does about prayer or faith. In fact, Jesus taught about money and material possessions more than he talked about hell and heaven combined. Why? Because one mark of a true disciple is the recognition that God owns all our possessions. This truth is the foundational principle for managing all we have. Even our very bodies belong to our maker. We are only stewards of our rich Father’s estate.

When Jesus laid out the terms of discipleship, he made clear that he demands everything of his followers: “And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won’t you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? . . . In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples” (Luke 14:27–33). All we are and all we have—all—belongs to the true Owner of our goods.
I Wandering into the Faith
Dr. Mike Svigel’s Testimony

Twenty-five years ago, the man who now chairs DTS’s department of Theological Studies followed the teachings of a cult leader. But the Holy Spirit used a part-time pastor/public-school teacher to change his mind.

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Five of Christ’s Teachings about Money
The Problem with Our Abundance
How Do I Give Wisely?
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Recommended Books about Stewardship

Kindred Spirit Online  dts.edu/ks

MONEY: Stewarding Our Father’s Resources

Devotional thought: On Abundance, by Priscilla Shirer
Excerpt: “Exemplary Jesus-Practices about Money” from Living into the Life of Jesus, by Dr. Klaus Issler
Article: “The Prayer of Agur,” by Dr. John Hutchison

also from our grads

Excerpt: “God and Scripture” from Jonathan Edwards and the Psalms, by Dr. David Barshinger
Humor article: “Coffee as a Means of Grace,” by Dr. Mike Svigel
Article: “Human Trafficking in North Texas,” by Rebecca Jowers
Excerpt: Dr. Jackie Roese on “Our Theological Ghosts”
Christian Post Interview: Dr. Ramesh Richard on training leaders in the Middle East
Excerpt: From Dr. Barry Jones’s new book, Dwell: Life with God for the World
Links to videos: Dr. Darrell Bock’s discussion of skeptics’ challenges to the Bible
Five of Christ’s Teachings about Money

Consider a series of five important themes that emerge from Jesus’s Sermon on the Mount.

1. **Stop letting obsessive worry about material needs overwhelm us.** Doing so demonstrates lack of trust in God (“little faiths,” Matt. 6:30; Luke 12:28). Through such paralyzing anxiety we become enslaved to money (Matt. 6:24–25) and act like those outside God’s family.

2. **Grow our trust in God’s provision for material needs.** Nature offers a daily reminder: if God provides food for birds and beauty for flowers, God can provide for his children, who are more valuable to him (Matt. 6:26; Luke 12:26). Trusting in God frees us to pursue God’s kingdom as a number one priority (Matt. 6:33; Luke 12:31).

3. **Be thankful to God for past provision of material needs.** God already knows and cares about our material needs (Matt. 6:32; Luke 12:30).

4. **Manage wisely the finances God entrusts to our care, with an eye on the future.** Jesus commands, “But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven” (Matt. 6:20), giving our uppermost attention and ambitions to what lasts for eternity. Jesus commands us to become “faithful and wise manager[s]” (Luke 12:42, 16:10–12). At death, we’ll give an account for our use of God’s material resources on loan to us, as illustrated in two parables (Matt. 25:14–30; Luke 19:11–27; cf. Matt. 12:36–37). To give a good account requires wise planning.

5. **Give generously to the needy from the material resources on loan from God.** “Sell your possessions and give to the poor” (Luke 12:33; Matt. 6:2–4). Jesus provides a basis for our giving now: “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32). With such a grand inheritance guaranteed—the new heavens and new earth involving both immaterial and material benefits—we can grow trust in God now for our own material needs and increase our generous sharing with the needy.

Excerpted from *Living into the Life of Jesus*, by Dr. Klaus Issler (ThM, 1977), published by IVP Books. Go to [dts.edu/ks](http://dts.edu/ks) to read the entire chapter online.
Nothing seems to fit comfortably. My closet is stuffed; my pantry is overflowing; my freezer is packed; the hallway linen closet is brimming; and even the catch-all “junk drawer” in my kitchen can barely contain the stuff we’ve thrown in it. And don’t even get me started on what my calendar and schedule used to look like.

Now, granted, our home is relatively small, and my closet space isn’t much bigger than one of those tiny airplane bathrooms. So my tendency is to blame our overrun quarters on the small space. But if this is the closet that the Lord has given me (and the pantry, and the linen cabinet, and the refrigerator/freezer), then it’s enough. Because he always gives enough. So over time I’ve gathered that none of these things is the problem. I am.

Why doesn’t 24 hours in a day suit our schedules? Why isn’t the surface of our desks enough space for our paperwork? Why do we need an extra freezer in the garage or a three-tiered rack from Home Depot to hold the overflow of our canned goods? Did our homes and car trunks and drawers all get tinier overnight? Did someone hold a meeting while we weren’t looking and steal four or five hours from our 24-hour days?

Or is it more probable that our spaces and hours aren’t too small, but our self-control and self-discipline are? We’ve unlearned the important, Spirit-empowered skill of saying “no,” dissatisfied with what fits within our means.

Go to dts.edu/ks to read more on this subject from author and conference speaker Priscilla Shirer.

Priscilla Shirer, (MA|BS), 1998
How Do I Give Wisely?

In a 2012 Christianity Today article, “Cost-Effective Compassion,” economist Bruce Wydick laid out what his research suggested were the best use of funds for the poor. In order of effectiveness the top five are as follows:

1. Provide clean water to rural villages.
2. Fund de-worming treatments for children.
3. Provide mosquito nets.
4. Sponsor a child.
5. Give wood-burning stoves.

Wydick concluded, “Whether one chooses to give money or work with the poor directly, what is important is to care enough about the poor to understand the effect of actions we take on their behalf.”

Caring and understanding are at the heart of Dr. Timothy Warren’s advice. The senior professor of Pastoral Ministries had this to say on the topic: “Giving wisely results from relationship. I give to the individuals and organizations with whom I have some level of relationship. The better I know people, the closer I am to their values, and the more I share their mission, the more likely I am to give.

“The opposite of that is that I don’t give to individuals or organizations with whom I have no relationship. If I don’t have some knowledge of their trustworthiness, there’s no chance I will contribute. For example, if people on the street ask me for money for food or a bus ride home, I will give only when I walk into a restaurant with them, or watch as they get on the bus. Otherwise, I don’t trust that my gift will be used as implied.

“The same is true of organizations. I have to trust their stewardship. If they are unwise in their spending, I will have been unwise in my giving. What really makes giving joyful and easy is when people I trust let me know what they need for a cause I fully support. Then I give wisely—out of that relationship.”

Percentage of the world population who live on less than $1.25 (US) per day. The World Bank

36.4% in 1990
14.5% in 2011

Jesus said we will always have the poor with us (Matt. 26:11). But both believers and unbelievers have done much to alleviate poverty worldwide in the past 20 years. GENEROSITY MAKES A DIFFERENCE!
Missions: How Can I Avoid Help That Hurts?

A DTS graduate serving overseas was approached by a donor who wanted only to build multiple orphanages in one city. But the city had too few orphans to fill that much space, and the ministry was moving to a model that supported extended family caring for their own orphaned family members. So the donor found an organization in that city that would fulfill his desire to build, and today his “orphan” space sits vacant.

Dr. Vic Anderson, department chair and associate professor of Pastoral Ministries, served for fifteen years as a missionary in Ethiopia with Serving in Mission (SIM). He often observed such misguided generosity, which can produce unintended and unforeseen harm. His three favorite resources about using money wisely in missions include African Friends and Money Matters: Observations from Africa by David E. Maranz; When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor . . . and Yourself by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, with a foreword by David Platt; and Messay Kebede’s Survival and Modernization, Ethiopia’s Enigmatic Present: A Philosophical Discourse. He notes that the principles apply anywhere, not just Africa.

Dr. Rodney Orr, department chair and associate professor of World Missions and Intercultural Studies, spent his formative years in Ethiopia and Germany. He served with Cru (Campus Crusade for Christ) for thirty-four years, seventeen of which were overseas. Dr. Orr said, “The best book I’ve ever read on this subject is The Spirituality of Fundraising by Henri Nouwen. It is actually a booklet but worth every penny. Money, Possessions and Eternity by Randy Alcorn is a close second.”

Percentage of income* spent on healthcare.

*USA
BIGGEST HOUSEHOLD EXPENSES

33% goes for housing

For upper-income households the next biggest expense is transportation at 17%.

But for low-income households the second biggest expense is food at 18%.

THE RICH Aren’t THE MOST GENEROUS.
Average cash giving (vs. goods, volunteer hours) per household discretionary income:

- 4.3% Poorest 20%
- 7.6% $50,000 to $75,000
- 2.8% Households in ZIP codes where more than 40% of residents earn $200,000+


CHRISTIANS DO GIVE MORE…
Percentage of people who donate money, time, and/or goods to charity:

- Today: 2.5%
- During the Great Depression: 3.3%

BUT OUR GENEROSITY HASN’T GROWN WITH OUR WEALTH.
Percentage of income Christians give to charity:

Sources: Barna.com, Relevant Magazine

In the year 2000, the United Nations set a goal to reduce extreme poverty and hunger 50% by 2015. The goal was met 5 years ahead of schedule, and Christians played a part. The number of children dying from poverty-related causes has dropped from 40,000 per day to less than 20,000 per day.

But that is still 20,000 children per day!
How to Vet a Charity

Lenita Dunlap (MA/CE, 2012) is the executive director at Heart House Dallas, a nonprofit organization that provides quality after-school care for refugee and immigrant children. She is a nonprofit professional with more than fifteen years of service in nonprofit and education sectors. Ms. Dunlap provides the following advice on how Christians can vet charities:

“Before giving to a Christian charity, **find out if it belongs to the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA)**, which holds member organizations (such as DTS) to seven standards of responsible stewardship:

- Doctrinal purity
- Good governance
- Financial oversight
- Compliance with civil laws
- Transparency
- Reasonable executive compensation
- Stewardship of charitable gifts

“At efca.org you can find specific information about Christian organizations. Additionally, Consumer Reports recommends three charity watchdogs for vetting nonreligious organizations:

**Charity Navigator / CharityWatch / BBB Wise Giving Alliance**

These organizations look especially at compensation and inordinate amounts of cash paid to fundraisers. Find out what ratings the vetted organizations receive, and seek to give only to those organizations with excellent evaluations.”

24% of Evangelicals contribute at least a tenth of their income to charity.

13.5% increase in online giving last year.
Me? Rich?

The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, “Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment” (1 Tim. 6:17).

He’s talking about us. Not convinced that you are rich? Since we know “rich” is a moving target, here are some questions to consider to see how you stack up against the rest of the world.

Take the following test. Do you...

✱ Have at least a kindergarten education?
✱ Stand in front of a closet full of shirts, pants, and sweaters lamenting that you have nothing to wear?
✱ Own more than a single pair of shoes?
✱ Change your clothes because you have special outfits to wear for different activities (such as sleeping, working, exercising, and relaxing)?
✱ Make $25,000/year or more? (Doing so places you in the top 2% of the world by income.)
✱ Buy the latest version of a phone or other technology to replace one that still works?
✱ Trade a mechanically sound vehicle along with some cash for a car that does essentially the same thing?
✱ Have the ability to take at least one day off a week and still make enough money to eat?
✱ Have the food for your next meal in your refrigerator, freezer, or pantry?

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, you qualify as rich. To see how rich you are compared with the rest of the world, go to globalrichlist.com to take the “Global Rich List” test.

Is Tithing Biblical?

We asked Dr. Glenn Kreider, professor of Theological Studies, what he teaches his students about tithing, and whether it’s biblical.

“I tell them that tithing is biblical like polygamy, slavery, and animal sacrifices are biblical. These concepts are included in the Bible. But they are all part of another covenant, one replaced by the New Covenant in the work of Christ.

“I tell my students that the tithes were a means of providing for Israel’s governmental costs, similar to taxes for us today, as well as for their religious services. Thus, providing for ministry costs is still our responsibility. On this subject, the New Testament teaches generous giving and loving your neighbor as yourself. For some, a tithe seems impossible. For others, a tithe is pocket change.

“I tell my students to give generously, regularly, systematically, and that this should include both their local church and other ministries they choose to support.”

Jennifer Callaway, Media intern
Santi and Sofia Garcia (not their real names) are faithful supporters of a variety of charitable organizations. When they expressed a desire for a more efficient, effective way to administer their giving, a friend who was a client of the Dallas Seminary Foundation (DSF) suggested they talk to DSF personnel. When the Garcias did so, they revealed they were contributing to more than thirty different organizations. Many of their gifts were regular monthly support checks to a variety of missionaries in addition to their church and other ministries. Sofia was handling all of the accounting, which included writing the checks, keeping track of receipts, and organizing everything for their accountant for year-end tax preparation.

The Garcias chose to set up a Donor Advised Fund with Dallas Seminary Foundation. Now they still give to their many chosen charities. But instead of writing dozens of checks monthly, they make two or three large contributions to their own private fund each year, which simplifies the tax-return preparation. They instruct the Foundation where they would like the funds sent, and DSF does all the administration.

Does this mean DSF sends funds to organizations other than Dallas Theological Seminary? Absolutely. DSF sends the funds to charities designated by the Garcias and sends the couple a confirmation of the distributions made from their account. In addition, the Garcias receive quarterly and annual reports showing what has gone into the fund, its earnings, the management expenses of the fund, and the disbursements that have been made. This greatly reduces their paperwork and simplifies their charitable giving.

Go to dallasseminaryfoundation.org for more information about setting up your own Donor Advised Fund.

The Cost of Higher Education

7 out of 10 US students graduate with loan debt. Average amount of debt at college graduation per grad: $29,400

Number one reason people give for not following through after applying to seminary: Money

Percentage of graduates nationwide with more than $40,000 in theological debt: 25+

Findings from over 1,700 seminary graduates

About 30% had to seek better paying jobs than the ministry.

About 25% said they or someone in their family had to postpone health care.

Only about half described their current financial situation as comfortable.

Sources: Project on Student Debt; DTS; Auburn Center for the Study of Theological Education; National Postsecondary Student Aid Study; PCUSA.
Recommended Books about Stewardship

The Treasure Principle Bible Study: Unlocking the Secret of Joyful Giving, second edition, by Randy Alcorn and Brian Smith
Bestselling author Randy Alcorn introduced readers to radical generosity and spiritual freedom when he released the first edition of this book fourteen years ago. Both editions focus on the teaching of Jesus, but the revised one includes an additional chapter that draws on Alcorn’s skills in writing fiction. He features an imaginary conversation between God and the believer in which they review individual stewardship of material resources.

Christians in an Age of Wealth: A Biblical Theology of Stewardship
Craig L. Blomberg and Jonathan Lund, general editor
Where do wealth and possessions fit into the Christian’s life? The authors point to the goodness of wealth as God designed it before surveying the Bible’s warnings about the risk of making materialism an idol. The sharing of possessions—generously and sacrificially—is presented as the key safeguard against greed and covetousness. In Christians in an Age of Wealth, believers learn how to “participate in God’s original good design for abundance and demonstrate the world-altering gospel of Christ.”

A Path Appears: Transforming Lives, Creating Opportunity
Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn
This New York Times bestselling husband/wife team do meticulous research and on-the-scene reporting about the art and science of giving. They offer practical, results-driven advice about how best to give and the lasting benefits gained by doing so. The book, while not written from a Christian perspective, is heartily endorsed by a number of respected evangelical leaders.

Crisis Leadership: Personal Accounts from Leaders Who Found Their Way and Thrived
Dr. D. Scott Barfoot (ThM, 1999)* and Dr. David R. Fletcher (ThM, 1985; DMin, 2004)

The Babylonian Experience and Israel’s Future: Promise and Fulfillment
Dr. Paul Bergquam (MA[B], 1984)

Truth in a Culture of Doubt: Engaging Skeptical Challenges to the Bible
Dr. Andreas J. Köstenberger, Dr. Darrell Bock (ThM, 1979)*, and Dr. Josh Chatraw (See p. 16 for more information.)

Dear Son: A Father’s Advice on Being a Man
Dave Bruskas (ThM, 1994)

Daniel: Discovering the Courage to Stand for Your Faith
Dr. Sue Edwards (MA[B], 1989)*

Exploring Christian Theology: Revelation, Scripture, and the Triune God *
DTS Theological Studies department (See p. 17 for more information.)

Agents of the Apocalypse: A Riveting Look at the Key Players of the End Times
Dr. David Jeremiah (ThM, 1967)

*DTS faculty member **Excerpt online
## Ources from the Seminary family

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<td>Dr. David R. Nienhuis and Dr. Robert W. Wall (ThM, 1973; ThD, 1979)</td>
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### Get this Book Deal!

As a Kindred Spirit reader, you may receive copies of *Where Do We Go from Here?* by Erwin Lutzer, for a donation of $5 each (includes shipping), while supplies last. Go to [dts.edu/ks](http://dts.edu/ks) to take advantage of this offer.
I was born in Minnesota to a working-class family of typical blue-collar workers like what you see in the “let’s-make-fun-of-Minnesota” movies. I grew up in a congregation that was a merge of liberal churches. My hometown of Keewatin couldn’t sustain two Protestant churches, so they got together. They sang what to me were the same indecipherable hymns and recited the same incomprehensible creeds. They smoked cheap cigarettes and drank weak coffee after worship. Neither church seemed to care all that much about the Bible, theology, or liturgy, so they merged to create Congregation of the Good Shepherd Church.

My parents were nominally Christian, and they didn’t pressure us kids to conform to any rigid standards. I sometimes went to church, often went to Sunday school, and generally engaged in only as much overt immorality as I could get away with and still judge my neighbors.

In my preteen years I clearly rejected Jesus Christ. I had watched enough of Garner Ted Armstrong’s The World Tomorrow (Worldwide Church of God cult propaganda) to conclude that the Trinity was a false doctrine and Jesus wasn’t really God. I had some Jewish atheist friends, too, who tried to convince me that there was no God. I never bought that. I needed to believe in some kind of God to help explain how anything could exist. But I kept him at a distance. The idea of God was as irrelevant to me as the idea of black holes or tachyon particles. Yet I had made some theological “progress”: I decided Jesus was only a moral teacher and that the Christian religion couldn’t possibly be true because it focused too much on that one man.

Dianetics and Dent
Without any kind of conviction, I embraced all kinds of crazy New Age philosophies, rebelled against my family, and got involved in unhealthy relationships. I take full responsibility. God bless my parents and friends for trying to snap me out of it. And bless those poor, deluded psychologists and counselors who tried to talk me (or drug me) out of it. And bless those poor, deluded psychologists and counselors who tried to talk me (or drug me) out of it. But it just wasn’t going to work in my case, because the root of my problem wasn’t social, medical, mental, or emotional. It was spiritual. I was a dirty, rotten, selfish, indulgent sinner. Now, I knew that. And God knew that. But nobody else seemed to know it.

By the age of sixteen my self-destructive behavior had led me down a path I couldn’t sustain for much longer without irreparable harm to myself or others. So, after seeing several pretty cool commercials for Dianetics on TV, I decided to give it a shot. I bought L. Ron Hubbard’s Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health and read it in one weekend. Then I read it again. Then I took notes. Then I borrowed the L. Ron Hubbard Dianetics audiotapes from the library, which led me to start my own private auditing sessions with friends. Soon after this I acquired additional Scientology resources and got in contact with the Church of Scientology in California.

Now, during my junior year of high school, Brian Dent entered my life. He was both my public-school English teacher and a local Baptist pastor. He saw me studying Dianetics one day during study hall and said, “Oh. L. Ron Hubbard!”

I glanced up at him, a little annoyed. “Yup.”

“He’s spending an extended vacation in the warmer regions.”

“No, no,” I insisted. “L. Ron Hubbard died a few years ago.”


“You mean you think he’s in hell?”

Absolutely.”

“Come on!” I said. I believed only evil people like Hitler, Stalin, and Jack the Ripper went to hell. All religious people would of course go to heaven.
Brian continued: “Sometime I'll tell you the other side of that.”

Other side? I argued with him, but he discouraged me from engaging in a theological debate in a public school. Before he moved on, however, he stared into my eyes, pointed his finger at me, and said something I'll never forget: “Someday L. Ron Hubbard is going to disappoint you. And when he does, call me.”

I brushed off Brian Dent as the fundamentalist wacko everybody said he was.

Convention and Conversion
That Easter weekend, my friend, Jim Moore, and I attended a Star Trek/Dr. Who convention in Minneapolis. I also used that trip to visit the Church of Scientology in the Twin Cities and participate in an official auditing session. All the while, though, God had other plans for me. While I was meandering through the “dealers’ room” at the convention, a book title caught my eye. The name “L. RON HUBBARD” jumped out in big yellow letters.

Assuming it was a Scientology book I didn’t have yet, I asked the used-book dealer if I could see it. As he handed it to me, he said, “That’s a first edition. It may be the last. It’s in the middle of litigation.” The title of the book gave me a queasy feeling: L. Ron Hubbard: Messiah or Madman? That first edition was by Bent Corydon (an ex-Scientologist) and L. Ron Hubbard, Jr. (Hubbard’s son, though his name as coauthor was struck from future editions). I paid an ungodly amount of money for that book and read the whole thing that weekend. The authors alleged a secret life of L. Ron Hubbard that, if true, would utterly discredit Hubbard and the religion he founded. Clearly, the book answered the question in the title with option “b”: Madman. At first I felt like a six-year-old who just found out there was no Santa Claus. I was devastated and embarrassed. So I thought, “Well, maybe this is just propaganda by some disgruntled ex-Scientologists.”

But my mind shot back: “If only 10 percent of this book is true, you’re in big trouble.”

Then I remembered Brian Dent’s words: “Someday L. Ron Hubbard is going to disappoint you. And when he does, call me.”

As soon as I returned from the convention, I phoned Dent at home. I told him what happened and that I wanted to talk to him about the “other side” of Scientology.

He invited me to his home, and there he shared the gospel of Jesus Christ with me. As he did so, my mind traveled to a similar moment when I was a kid. A kind woman named Bonnie Olson had held a Good News Club in our neighborhood and had shared the same gospel with me. And I had heard the same message once from one of the more conservative Lutheran pastors at Congregation of the Good Shepherd. For some reason it reassured me that the same gospel had come from several different people with different church backgrounds at different times in my life. At that moment, everything clicked. I trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ as the God-man who died for my sin and rose from the dead. In his sovereignty, God had called me by his Holy Spirit into the kingdom of his Son. But from my perspective at the time, I had simply wandered into the faith.

Growing and Going
My friends and family were convinced I had just stumbled into a new fad that would soon pass. But when I was baptized with a number of friends whom I had introduced to the Lord, my conversion to Christ was sealed. A couple of those friends were the same ones who had tried years earlier to convince me that there was no God.

Together we all joined Old Scenic Community Church of Little Fork, where Brian Dent was a part-time pastor. And by my first year of college, I felt a call to some kind of ministry. I wanted to commit my life to full-time Christian service, so I transferred to a Bible college, where I studied the Scriptures. There I met my wife, Stephanie, and married her. And later I pursued studies at DTS.

Though the content of my faith has been refined over the past twenty-five years, it has never wavered. Yes, I’ve had doubts, disappointments, and momentary deviations from the straight path. But Christ has kept his promise never to forsake me. And no matter how or where I’ve wandered, he has always restored me to faith, courage, and a holy walk by the abiding Spirit.

Dr. Michael J. Svigel (rhymes with “eagle”), department chair and associate professor of Theological Studies, has written numerous resources for Christian lay audiences. His book titles include RetroChristianity: Reclaiming the Forgotten Faith and Heroes and Heretics: Solving the Modern Mystery of the Ancient Church. He is also co-editor of the Exploring Christian Theology series (see related article on p. 17). Many of Dr. Svigel’s written works, from scholarly to theological humor, can be found online at retrochristianity.org and bible.org.
DTS Marks 90th Anniversary with Live Worldwide Simulcast

On October 16, 2014, friends of DTS joined us in person and on the Internet for a big Ninetieth Anniversary Celebration. The Seminary’s three living presidents—Dr. Donald Campbell, Dr. Charles Swindoll, and Dr. Mark Bailey—hosted a simulcast that focused on the faithfulness of God to our school and our gratitude for his blessings over nine decades. Alumnus Dr. Chip Ingram joined the presidents in providing a challenge to alumni and friends. The event also featured a video that reviewed God’s faithfulness to the school along with clips from grads around the world—all available at dts.edu/90 for viewing. (To read tweets on Twitter, search for #DTS90.)

Learn to Engage with Skeptics

Dr. Darrell Bock talks about Bart Ehrman’s book How Jesus Became God and his charge that Jesus’s divinity “emerged in early Christianity,” in a new video from B&H Academics. Dr. Bock also gives advice for discussing Christianity with skeptics and addresses contemporary trends in historical Jesus research. He and his coauthors Andreas Köstenberger and Josh Chatraw discuss these topics in their new release, Truth in a Culture of Doubt: Engaging Skeptical Challenges to the Bible. At dts.edu/ks you can find links to clips from the videos.

New Advanced Standing Policies Save Students Time and Money

DTS has revamped its Advanced Standing program to allow those with prior Bible training to apply more credits toward a seminary degree. Those with credits from approved undergraduate institutions or parachurch organizations’ study programs can apply qualifying credits toward up to 25 percent off a seminary degree, earning up to one year off a ThM or a semester or more off an MA degree.

A student accepted into the program said, “It allows me to get into ministry more quickly and with lower cost.” A Bible college graduate wrote, “I appreciate how DTS’s new accelerated courses take me deeper without making me repeat the same ideas.”

Students may qualify for one of several kinds of Advanced Standing:

- **Dallas Campus Accelerated program** – Qualifying students earn up to 25% off their degree by taking accelerated courses.
- **Distance/Online Customized program** – Distance education students earn up to 15 hours off a ThM or 9 hours off an MA, as well as additional credits on a course-by-course basis.
- **Course-by-course Reduction** – Incoming students can take objective exams to qualify for credit.
- **Substitution of Credit Hours** – Students may replace some core courses with advanced ones.

The DTS administration wants our students to graduate debt-free and ready to serve. Visit dts.edu/advancedstanding for more information.
DTS Department Creates Theology Trilogy Together

Nearly a quarter (22%) of evangelicals said God the Father is more divine than Jesus, and 9 percent weren’t sure—according to a recent LifeWay Research poll.

Recognizing the need to educate Christians about their faith, members of the Theological Studies Department at DTS are producing a trilogy of mini-theologies titled *Exploring Christian Theology* (ECT). Publisher Baker Bethany House is producing the series edited by DTS profs Dr. Nathan Holsteen and Dr. Michael Svigel (see profile on p. 14), with significant contributions by their colleagues Drs. Douglas Blount, Scott Horrell, Lanier Burns, and Glenn Kreider. These authors started with the release of what is actually the third volume in the series, *The Church, Spiritual Growth, and the End Times*. Volume 1, *Revelation, Scripture, and the Triune God*, came out in November 2014.

The volumes present believers with introductions, overviews, and reviews of key tenets of orthodox Protestant evangelical theology.

Some key features make this series different from most theology books.

**IT’S INTERDENOMINATIONAL.** The authors wrote *Exploring Christian Theology* (ECT) for a genuinely interdenominational evangelical audience. This means pastors, teachers, students, lay leaders, new believers, and mature saints of every orthodox Protestant evangelical church can use these volumes without feeling like they have to constantly counter the authors’ assertions with their own views.

**IT’S INFORMAL.** The series style is popular and accessible, not academic. Think contractions, illustrations, and alliteration. Readers will find generous bullet points, charts, and graphs.

**IT’S ACCESSIBLE.** Readers can quickly read summaries of specific areas of doctrine. But the points are also comprehensive, thorough, well-researched and documented.

**IT’S CREATED IN COMMUNITY.** Rather than presenting the perspectives of an individual teacher, tradition, or denomination, ECT is planned, written, and edited by theologians who are experts in their fields. They hold each other accountable to avoid personal hobbyhorses and pet peeves.

The most recent release makes clear that Christ and the Spirit are as divine as the Father; each one of the three persons of the one triune God is fully God.

Pardon Our Dust

The DTS main campus continues to undergo renovations. Among other improvements, we’re adding a global learning center for videoconferencing and online courses, better enabling us to deliver theological training worldwide as we fulfill our mission of equipping godly servant leaders throughout the world.

DTS Washington D.C. Appoints New Director

Today in Manassas, Virginia, students can earn two complete DTS master’s degrees on site—the Master of Arts in Christian Leadership (MA/CL) and the Master of Arts in Biblical Studies (MA[BS]). The D.C. campus recently welcomed its first full-time director, Josh Bleeker. Go to dts.edu/ks to view a message from Josh and get to know more about him.

KS Editor Listed as One of Top 15 Professors

The Art Career Project recently named its top fifteen Art Professors in Dallas/Ft. Worth. Making the list was Dr. Sandra Glahn, associate professor in Media Arts and Worship at DTS. The judges said, “A graduate of Washington Bible College, DTS, and the University of Texas at Dallas, Glahn has written nearly twenty books and regularly blogs about Christian leadership and women in Christianity. She draws inspiration from her personal life and it translates in the classroom, where students say she is a stern but fair grader who genuinely cares about their success.”
**Wives of Men in Ministry Retreat**  
**March 22–24, 2015, at Pine Cove, Tyler, Texas**  
With Lynn Kitchens of Christ Chapel Bible Church, Fort Worth, Texas

Get away to Pine Cove, where wives of men in ministry will gather to rejoice that God is using them and the work he does through their families. The retreat offers a chance for rest and refreshment.

**Ministry to the Marginalized**  
**April 20, 2015, at the DTS Dallas Campus**  
With Kay Warren of Saddleback Church of Lake Forest, California

Join DTS for a one-day conference that focuses on the church’s role in ministering to those living with mental and developmental disabilities and the practical realities of such ministry.

**More Than A Paycheck: LA**  
**June 26–27, 2015, at Talbot School of Theology, La Mirada, California**  
With John Townsend, Darrell Bock, Scott Rae, Bill Pollard, and many more

DTS is offering a two-day conference in LA. More Than a Paycheck: LA celebrates that God made humanity to be creative and to manage our world. Embracing work as a sacred call from God himself, men and women will discover how to be agents of worship and ministry in the workplace.

For these and all events from the Hendricks Center for Christian Leadership and Cultural Engagement, visit [dts.edu/conferences](http://dts.edu/conferences) or call 214-887-5253.

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**The World Is Our Classroom**

Some seminary training happens in nontraditional settings. Here’s a sampling of what DTS students can do for credit:

- Explore the intersection of theology and music at South by Southwest (SXSW), a set of annual film, interactive, and music festivals and conferences held in Austin, Texas.
- Train to do camping ministry at Pine Cove Christian Camp in Tyler, Texas.
- Get “The BIG Picture: Grasping the Master’s Plan from Genesis to Revelation” during a course held at The Cove in Asheville, North Carolina.
- Walk where Jesus walked—and to the top of Masada—on an annual, three-week Israel study tour.
- Study Medieval Spirituality and Art on a biennial trip to Orvieto, Florence, Milan, Vicenza, and Venice, Italy.
- Engage with Pulitzer and National Book Award winners, and consider how to write more effectively about faith at the biennial Calvin Festival of Faith and Writing in Grand Rapids, Michigan.
- Interact with film and theology, and improve in the craft of storytelling at the annual Sundance Film Festival® in Park City, Utah.

With each immersion experience opportunity, at least one professor accompanies students as they engage theologically in the content and context.
Loosen Your Grip

Hasn’t God been good to you? He certainly has been to me. Better than I deserve! My list includes a loving Lord, good health, caring family, sufficient food, clothing, and shelter. A great church. I could go on. Yes, we’ve all had our share of heartache this side of heaven. But God has still blessed us with so much.

In light of his magnificent grace, a cheerful heart and openhanded generosity seem the most natural responses. Second Corinthians 9:7 says, “Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”

Everything we’ve received should evoke in us a desire to give with joy. Yet so often we do the opposite—we hoard and refuse to share.

So many people hoard these days; in fact, there’s a TV series about people who hoard. It would be easy for those who watch it to say, rather smugly, “I’m glad I’m not like that.” But, have you checked your garage or attic lately?

When kids are small it’s not uncommon to witness this scene: One child has received a new toy and has played with it so long it’s lost its charm . . . so he tosses it aside. As soon as his little sister comes along and picks it up, the shrieking begins immediately, “Mine! Mine! That’s mine!” as the toy is snatched back.

Unfortunately, most rarely outgrow selfishness. Many years ago I conducted a funeral for a man I’d never met, who died without family or friends. All he had was a fox terrier to whom he left his entire estate—approximately $76,000. Even though many worthy causes could have benefited from that man’s estate, he chose to give it all to a canine that had no clue.

Few people understood human nature better than the apostle Paul. Knowing how selfish all of us can be, he offered a brief but bold contrast: “God loves a cheerful giver.” The Greek term he used for “cheerful” has the same root as our English word, “hilarious.”

I can think of a few examples of cheerful givers in the New Testament: a man named Onesiphorus who “often refreshed” Paul (2 Tim. 1:16–18); a church—the Philippians—who contributed generously to Paul’s needs (Phil. 4:14–16); and a widow held up as a model for giving all she had (Luke 21:1–4).

Our Lord prizes generosity, especially hilarious generosity. We need to break the habit of being so ultraconservative, so tightfisted. It wouldn’t be a bad idea if you occasionally “scared” yourself with acts of such extreme generosity that you experience what it means to go to the limit and “sow bountifully.” I dare you!

The author of Hebrews tells us, “Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you’” (13:5). If all the other blessings were not enough, we have even the Lord himself. Christians have the best reason of all who occupy a place on this planet to loosen our grip—and to do so with over-the-top hilarity!
GIVE

AND IT WILL BE GIVEN TO YOU.

A GOOD MEASURE,

PRESSED DOWN,

SHAKEN TOGETHER

AND RUNNING OVER,

WILL BE POURED INTO YOUR LAP.

FOR WITH THE MEASURE YOU USE,

IT WILL BE MEASURED TO YOU.

JESUS

LUKE 6:38