



Time will tell if the words of that counselor at the retreat prove out, but it is a biblical stewardship principle to share what we have been given. That includes many kinds of life's blessings.

If you have a skill, if you have been privileged

to learn some things along your walk, pass them on. To be a mentor sounds daunting, but most of the mentoring that was given to me was far less formal than you might think. I learned to turn a wrench on my car while holding a flashlight for my dad. I learned to enjoy the outdoors while following my Pathfinder and Scout leaders out into nature. I learned to love Jesus by watching people walk out their faith in churches and living rooms.

I was mentored over lunches and around tables, but very little of it was formal. It consisted of conversations with men and women who had an interest in sharing, but little more agenda than that.

Take what you know and give it away. You might just bless the future.

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#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Pastor Walt Groff and his wife Brenda are the proud parents of three adult children. Pastor Groff has been a pastor for more than 30 years in the Northern California Conference where he is known as an innovator and valued member of the conference team. He has pastored Gracepoint Adventist Church in Rocklin California through its transition from plant to thriving congregation as well as served as Northern California Conference's ministerial director. Pastor Groff has spoken for churches and camp meetings in the United States, and in several places outside the U.S. where his storyteller's style has been well received.

Pastor Groff is a graduate of Pacific Union College where he earned a Bachelors of Arts in pastoral theology, and Andrews University where he earned his Masters of Divinity.

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# The STEWPOT

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

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## STEWARDED YOUR EXPERIENCE

BY WALT GROFF

A few years ago, I was invited to a retreat. It would take place at a Northern California location and would include some people I knew and admired. It took some effort to get it worked out in my schedule, and also to get my mind around the fact that large parts of each day would be committed to silence. Finding the retreat center was a bit of an adventure as well. Though a beautiful drive, those last few miles were pretty anxious. Driving along a stretch

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



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of narrow road looking for the right driveway—which, once found, still led you to a setting that had nothing, including no apparent signage to confirm you were in the right place—was nerve-wracking. I drove furtively up the drive on a rainy fall day, recognizing neither the cars nor the door that would be an appropriate entrance.

I stalled until I saw another

person getting things from his car and followed him inside.

The quaint, old building enveloped its entrants in wood and the musty scent of damp from the sea. The rhythms of the days were punctuated by meals and reflective conversations guided by a spiritual director. Each afternoon we were asked to take a sack lunch and drive off to one of the many trails and beaches around the area for time alone with God. I needed the hiking to slow and then quiet my internal conversations. After a few days of extended quiet afternoons, I came to my calling. What were the next things that God was asking of me? Did God desire for me to move, change roles, or what, exactly?

I took some time for a personal interview with the man who was leading our conversations. We talked about ministry and my thoughts out among the pine trees. It did not take long before he mentioned the changing roles of a call to ministry. He mentioned that the early steps are about learning, followed by applying what we learn, and then sharing those things with others. I mentioned that God had been bringing me into a relationship with some younger ministers and seemed to perhaps be allowing me that privilege.

It seems both natural and odd to be sharing what I have learned with young pastors. I have been on the receiving end of mentoring for most of my life; I was still in my teens when a businessman in my local church took the time to talk to me about life choices, education, and the call I was sensing from God, and I have been intentional about developing accountability relationships with pastors and leaders who have more experience

than I. But the unique relationship which developed with the founder of the *Stewpot*, Dr. Gordon Botting, was one I still cherish.

It has been about two decades since Gordon approached me with a simple proposal. He said, "I'd like to spend some time sharing with you what I have learned along the way in ministry." I was pleased and a little shocked by the opportunity. We started a regularly irregular lunch meeting. Gordon and I sat at tables around Sacramento and occasionally the Concord area as our schedules permitted. These lunches would wander on for a couple of hours until one of us had to move on to our next appointment. There was no agenda except to talk about ministry.

We would discuss what he was doing, what I was doing, and he would often cast pearls my way—insights and experiences which had helped him when he was in a similar situation. Many of the things I do in ministry today were touched and shaped by those days with Gordon.

Gordon would at times share grand visions of what could be, should be, or might be. Some of those wishes I see working out even now. He would have been so glad to see the Northern California Conference office in the old Adventist Health building; he saw this as a good partnership years before it happened.

He was thoughtful about the way the church was managed, and aware of leadership practices before their study was *en vogue*. Gordon was a tremendous resource. He guided me to books he thought worth reading and talked to me about structuring church in ways that made sense. When he cleaned out his files, he cherry-picked articles he thought would bless me—and they did.

In essence, Gordon was demonstrating what the counselor at the retreat had said to me: "It's time to share what you have learned with younger pastors."

It has been a few years since Gordon passed to rest and now awaits the return of our Maker. I miss him. But the legacy that a person gives to the next generation holds the potential to carry on until it meets them in another voice at the resurrection.

I not only still practice things that Gordon taught me; I also share them. If God sees fit for me to give as much as I have gotten, the influence of those who have poured the waters of their education into me will overflow on still others. None of us is meant to be a vessel that only contains the things we have been given. We are meant to dispense them as a blessing to others.

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**Gordon Botting**