

COOL TOOLS FOR SABBATH SCHOOL

The Investment Secretary

How would you like the Lord Jesus to be your partner in business? He made all the difference when He joined Peter, Andrew, James, and John and went fishing. On another occasion His blessing on just five loaves and two fish left thousands not only well fed, but also filled with wonder. And you remember too that His touch turned plain water into choice wine.

Investment is a partnership with God, one that never fails. In its purest sense, it is not just another offering—although it may be related to our Sabbath School offerings and will usually call for some sacrifice on the part of the member involved. Investment is different. It is unique. Sabbath School Investment might be briefly defined as a plan to invest our human resources of money, materials, time, and talents in a faith venture with God, praying and expecting that He will add divine power and blessing to ensure an increase for the benefit of His world-wide gospel work.

The investors carefully and prayerfully choose a plan. They then invite God's participation as a business partner. Heaven's blessing on human effort brings results that at times are nothing less than miraculous—as many happy and surprised investors can testify.

The investor begins with a certain amount of "capital" which may be cash or certain items to be increased in value. These items may be trees, plants, lumber, pets, fabrics, foods, artist paints and brushes, craft materials—in fact anything that with time and skill can be grown, developed, or crafted into something of enhanced value in order to earn a profit. The increase, either in part or in whole, becomes the investor's contribution to the Sabbath School Investment fund. Some give all the proceeds while others choose to retain a portion for reinvesting.

Many select plans that are an adaptation or outgrowth of their regular employment, utilizing their specialized skills for increased income for the Lord. As examples one may cite the contractor who dedicates a set percentage of each new contract; or the medical worker who devotes to Investment his or her earnings for services rendered to patients on Sabbath. Another may donate tips or a portion of overtime salary received. Some ministers regularly give fees received for weddings and funerals. The farmer may give the proceeds from milk produced on Sabbath or from the sale of eggs produced on the Sabbath. An writer may dedicate funds from articles or books.

Some have given a percentage of "unexpected blessings." One man started giving 10 percent of money, discounts, or other financial increases that were received when not expected. In addition to tithe, he continued to give 10 percent of unexpected increase in income as well to Sabbath School Investment. This has resulted in gifts of thousands of dollars and serves as an amazing reminder of the many ways God provides for the needs of His people. Another elderly couple recycled cardboard and other materials. This project alone has contributed more than \$10,000 to Sabbath School Investment through the years.

Some professional photographers, artists, hairdressers, typists, computer programmers, etc. in regular employ are able to do "moonlighting" work after hours, and so earn extra funds for Investment. There is no end to the ideas that can work when we are in partnership with the Lord. He is pleased to add His blessing to the many varied ways for developing increased resources beyond our usual income. He can improve our opportunities for such tasks, as well as assist us in performing them with skill and efficiency.

How Investment Funds Are Used

Along with all other Sabbath School offerings (except Sabbath School expense funds that are retained in the local church), Investment funds, according to denominational policy, are routinely forwarded intact by the local church treasurer to the conference or mission, which in turn passes them on through the union and division to the General Conference. No portion is kept by the local church or at any church organizational level. All these offerings are considered as General Conference funds to be included in the World Mission Fund which is disbursed at the Annual Council.

The World Mission Fund is divided among all divisions according to the budget voted by the



General Conference Committee. Each Division has the opportunity of expressing its needs and requests prior to the presentation of the budget. Obviously some divisions have far greater needs than others and receive larger disbursements.

Special Projects

As a means of encouraging increased participation in Sabbath School Investment, the General Conference Annual Council in 1976 voted to set aside each year 25 percent of all Investment funds for special projects as selected by each division committee. This 25 percent is divided as follows: 10 percent is allocated to projects in North America; 90 percent is divided among the other divisions, prorated according to their needs.

The divisions are to use these special funds for projects that open up new work (frontier evangelism) or for large city evangelism. The 75 percent of Investment not used for special projects is added to the World Mission Fund, which is divided among all the divisions to be used at the direction of the division committees.

Because of its unique nature and special opportunities, Investment has not been designated as part of the Personal Giving Plan operating in some churches. Rather, it provides additional funds to supplement those already flowing into the World Mission Fund through regular channels.

The Roots of the Investment Fund

When J. N. Andrews and family sailed for Europe in 1874 as the first official church-supported missionaries from North America, few realized that an evangelistic explosion was about to take place. Soon the trickle of missionaries became a torrent, as country after country was penetrated with the gospel in the light of the three angels' messages of Revelation.

First it was Europe, soon to be followed by the other continents and island groups. By the early 1900s, missions had been established in most major countries. As soon as possible, elementary and secondary schools, colleges, and hospitals were established in strategic places to train national workers for the future. It soon became obvious that a new, reliable, and continuing source of funds must be found to meet the growing needs of a rapidly expanding work.

Sabbath School members caught the vision as early as 1886, when several churches in Oregon and California gave their surplus Sabbath School offerings for missions. Soon other churches joined in. By 1909 the climate was right for a general policy to

be adopted worldwide: all Sabbath Schools would henceforth devote their main offering each week to world missions.

But even this was insufficient. As early as 1880 some members were raising extra funds by planting crops or dedicating livestock and giving the proceeds to missions or local church-related projects. This enabled them to enhance their giving. Like the early church in Corinth, they were giving of themselves as well as their offerings (2 Cor. 8:5).

As she read the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30, Lottie Lohman of Hamilton, Missouri, was inspired to give five cents each to five children in her Sabbath School. This was 1905. But what could children do with five cents? Some bought seeds for planting, while others invested in eggs for hatching. Before long, with the blessing of their heavenly Partner, the 25 invested cents became \$11.52 for missions. Experiences like this inspired others to invest for the Lord.

Ellen White wrote, "If they were encouraged to do so, the children would earn means to devote to benevolent purposes, and to the advancement of the cause of God; and their interest would be increased by the fact that they had invested something in these enterprises."*

Gradually the potential of Investment became more apparent. But it was another 20 years before Investment was officially embraced by the Sabbath School and dedicated entirely to world missions.

The Investment Secretary

Promotion stimulates action. The Sabbath Schools where Investment is most successful reflect the enthusiasm, inspiration, and example of good leadership. Leaders who take their responsibilities seriously and prayerfully realize tremendous satisfaction as they see the Sabbath School members respond to their suggestions.

Though all officers and teachers have a role to play, it is the Investment secretary who is primarily responsible for the success of the Investment program. Elected annually by the church, the Investment secretary serves on the Sabbath School Council, where plans are made for the year.

Because Investment is for all the Sabbath School divisions, it is often necessary to appoint an assistant who can share the load by being responsible for certain children's divisions. Promotion needs to be maintained on a regular schedule, preferably on the second Sabbath of each month.

Most Sabbath Schools have discovered that Investment is best launched early in January, and brought to a conclusion in mid-November, before the

rush of yearend festivities. However, this does not always correspond with the year of office. Many churches change officers in the middle of the year. This results in a change of leadership during the Investment year. To overcome this weakness, some churches are discovering the benefits of electing the Investment secretary for the calendar year. To introduce the plan, the outgoing secretary may be asked to continue in office until the end of the calendar year, with the newly elected secretary acting temporarily as an assistant. This arrangement allows for training the new secretary and provides for an unbroken calendar year to bring Investment plans to full fruition.

Job Description of the Investment Secretary

- Be responsible for promoting Investment in all divisions on a regular monthly schedule, commencing ideally on the second Sabbath in January, and concluding on the second Sabbath in November.

- From the Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department of your conference or mission, order adequate supplies of suitable materials to be distributed throughout all divisions. These would include items such as: (1) Investment project leaflets for adults and other leaflets for the children. Each of these brochures contains many ideas for Investment. These are available from the General Conference through your local conference or mission. (2) Other supplies such as money banks, coin holders, goal charts, and awards may be available in your conference or mission from time to time. Enquire of your Sabbath School and Personal Ministries Department.

- Meet with the Sabbath School Council to plan for the year's activities and to set a suitable Investment goal for the Sabbath School. Avoid goals that are so high that they discourage or so low that they provide no challenge. We suggest a goal of about 10 percent above your attainment of the previous year. It would be well also to have a goal for percentage of members involved. The success of your Sabbath School depends on getting the vast majority doing something toward the overall goal.

- Encourage members to place their Investment in a special container provided or, if this is not available, use the regular tithe and offering envelope, but be sure to mark it "Investment"—otherwise it will not be credited to the Investment fund. The special projects would then not benefit.

- Ask the church treasurer to report to you regularly so that you can keep the Sabbath School informed of the monthly progress. Armed with this information, you can keep the goal charts up to date.

- Assist the division leaders in the selection of suitable goal devices. It is not only the children who appreciate an informative device.

- Constantly be alert for Investment success stories from among your Sabbath School members as well as from other areas. You will find these quite inspirational during your monthly presentations. At times you may have members tell their own success stories, or you may choose to interview members. Keep the stories brief and bright. Avoid the tendency that sometimes creeps in to turn this period into a sales pitch for the various articles that may be for sale!

- Meet occasionally with the Sabbath School teachers to solicit their support. Some classes work together on a pre-selected project. Or teachers can make suggestions that will help individuals select an appropriate plan to work on.

- Attend conference or mission-sponsored training programs for Investment leaders. You are bound to pick up some new ideas as well as much inspiration as you mingle with other leaders.

- Report to the Conference the return of health food labels that qualify for refunds. Report blanks should be available from your local conference or mission.

- Constantly pray for the success of the Investment program.

Suggested Ten-Minute Program to Introduce Investment

The superintendent would introduce the new Investment secretary. The Investment secretary would then:

1. Explain what Investment is. Often there are new members who do not understand. Emphasize the "partnership with God" aspect.

2. Briefly allude to the history of Investment and what it has accomplished for the world mission program.

3. Show the goal chart and inform the Sabbath School of the goal that the Council has set for the Sabbath School.

4. Relate one or two brief success stories, emphasizing the simplicity of the plan.

5. Distribute to each member the Investment brochures. Challenge them to put God to the test.

6. Have a brief prayer for the success of the whole Investment program.

Suggestions for Other Monthly Programs

1. Explain how the Investment funds are used. A chalkboard will make it easier to explain, particularly the details regarding the special projects. Emphasize that each year every Division receives special project

funds to be used for new work or for large city evangelism.

2. Mention all of the needs in areas where these special projects are located. Your conference or mission Sabbath School and Personal Ministries director will provide you with information. Union papers and the *Adventist Review* (or *LEAD Magazine*, formerly *Sabbath School Leadership*) may from time to time carry articles on these. Or there may be reports concerning projects of former years.

3. Have a children's division come and tell what they are doing for Investment.

4. Ask pastors to tell what Investment plans they have followed over the years.

5. Interview someone who has had a successful Investment experience.

6. Place on a chalkboard or poster a suitable quotation from the Spirit of Prophecy. Although Ellen

White did not specifically refer to Investment, she frequently spoke of the need to support the mission program. See *Counsels on Stewardship* for appropriate messages.

7. Using a chart or some form of visual aid, keep the Sabbath School informed of monthly progress toward the goal.

8. Occasionally ask for a show of hands of those currently working on an Investment plan.

9. Arrange for an annual sale of items that have been made—Christmas cards, baked goods, crafts, clothes, doll's clothes, repaired toys, or items donated by members.

10. Ask members to write on slips of paper their suggestions for Investment.

**Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, pp. 140, 141.

