

## **PROFILE – David Steward**

### **Narrator:**

This month on UMC.org Profiles, David Steward, chairman and founder of World Wide Technology, Inc. – one of the largest African-American-owned businesses in America – and author of Doing Business by the Good Book, shares his faith story.

David Steward came from a home where his family would put their last dollar into the offering plate, and he now runs a global company worth nearly \$2 billion. Steward believes in the biblical principle of sowing and reaping, but his primary focus isn't money...it's people. He wants his life to be about walking in love, and sowing the seed of the Word into people's lives. He believes that he is "blessed to be a blessing," and faithfully gives back to the church and community. His life is an example of what putting faith into action can accomplish.

### **David Steward:**

I grew up in a family with 7 brothers and sisters. There are four of each of us. And I'm the fifth child. We lived on the other side of the tracks. Kind of the dividing line between the haves and the have-nots. We were always at church. St. James United Methodist Church on the other side of the tracks. This was a place of worship, this was a place that was a source and foundation for our lives, to get us started for the next week. A place you knew not only that you're going to get a sense and a feel for God's love and His care, but also hope for the future.

I was the first African American to go to the fully integrated school system in Clinton, Missouri in 1954 with Brown vs. Board of Education. I was going to go into the 1<sup>st</sup> grade with integrated schools. And my mother just told me a few short years ago that this was a big problem, going to be a big issue. My father and other men of the town were so concerned about the Ku Klux Klan. So my father, with other men of the community, went out on the edge of town and stayed out all night to insure that this was not going to be a problem or an issue. To meet it head on. To make the sacrifice for his children to have a better quality of life. So as I look at the things and the privileges that we have today and the opportunities we have today, and the racism and the challenges that they faced in their lives, with even growing up myself having to go to the balcony of the movie theater opposed to being able to sit down with everyone else. Or having, there were restaurants that you could not go to, not saying that we could afford to go to a restaurant, but there were restaurants you knew that you weren't welcome. Even the public swimming pool in the town I grew up, they wouldn't allow persons of color to go to the swimming pool. What I learned most about growing up in that environment, I got a glimpse of seeing what

my parents and my grandparents endured and sacrificed for and fought for, for communities to come together and their children to have a better quality of life than they did.

And to see my father toil at many jobs in the community. Because he could not work for the major power company in the area, and make three times the amount of money he was making where he was, actually about five times the amount he was making where he was, he had to supplement his income and find a way to make it work. So we had this small semi-farm, and we had farm animals. He would act as a bartender at various parties. He hauled trash because he had a truck. He also had a janitorial service that he did on Friday nights and Saturdays. He was a master mechanic as well. And so the real first true entrepreneur that I had the pleasure of seeing was seeing him finding a way to overcome the obstacles that were set in front of him to provide for his family. So that was my first experience of getting a sense and a feel for drive and determination and perseverance. It shows that in spite of all the challenges that people have, if they have a will and determination and they have faith and hope, that any and all things are possible.

My mother was a loving, caring housewife that provided the kind of peace and tranquility and love and care for her children. And it was a nice balance of that. I remember my mother telling me, she said, "You know something, we don't have much money, but here's my last dollar. Take it to the church, to Sunday school, I want you to put this dollar in the church." It was that important to her that that dollar get in the church, because she knew that sowing that seed into the church, there was a manifestation of something very special for us. It instilled in me that it was vital that I do that because there was a blessing in there for us. And so I did exactly what she said, and for sowing supernaturally, money came available. You sow seed of money or resource or time, you get out of it what you put into it.

I did move away from home and went to Central Missouri State University in Warrensburg, Missouri. I played college basketball there for four years, and was excited to do that, and was probably some of the greatest years I've ever had, just experiencing new people and seeing new people and learning and growing and making some decisions on my own. And it says, "From the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks." I began to realize that the Christian values and my faith was an important part of my decision making process. So that means that the church, and the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, and St. James United Methodist Church, and Clinton United Methodist Church were a part of my life. And the people I surrounded myself with were people of faith, and it helped me make the kinds of decisions that were around the core values and principles of the word of God itself. I don't know if I could have gotten through school

without prayer, without faith, without making the kinds of Godly decisions that put me in line to be successful in college and beyond.

I think we have to have faith in God's prosperity and be focused on making decisions around the prosperity that God has for each and every one of us, and the favor that He has for each and every one of us. So that means we have to walk in the fruits of the Spirit. And it has to do with self-control, it has to do with patience, it has to do with making decisions in love, opposed to hate and fear and indifference. Faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen. That's in Hebrews where it talks about what faith really is. And it says "belief in the unseen." Like, for example, right now we are a company that has a tremendous amount of faith by living beyond our circumstances. We're a company last year that did almost two billion dollars. And that's in a 15 year period of time. And it manifested itself because we had faith. This business is growing and exploding and giving us even more of an opportunity and an obligation and responsibility to the community to do even more. We've been so richly blessed, and that is to be shared. And seeds continue to be sown. And we continue to invest time, effort, and energy into this community, and it also says along with that stewardship, not only much is given much is required, but also "What you've done for the least of them, you have done for me."

I belong to Salem United Methodist Church. The pastors there, and the support team they have there, are so loving and so caring, and the congregation is just great to be around. It's a fun place to be as well. But we're serious about the mission. I'm a Sunday school teacher. It's exciting to teach there, and we share the word of God with one another in our experiences and so forth, and how the Bible is as applicable today as it has been some 2,000 years ago. And how they apply in your life, how they apply in business, how they apply in your marriage, and so forth. There's not one circumstance that you can't find in the word of God that won't resolve issues and challenges that you might have in life. And it helps us in our ability to be able to have stronger marriages, a stronger church, and stronger families in our community as a result of it.

So the United Methodist Church has meant a lot. And it being organized, not only within the church, but it being organized on a global scale to represent and be that ambassador that God would have us be, in this global place to bring the word of God and the prosperity of God and love of God and the peace of God into people's lives around the globe. I think it's all about love. If you take a look at 1 Corinthians 13:4, and if we decide that we're going to walk in love – with everybody, no matter what the circumstances – love, it says in the word of God, love conquers all. And that's what God is. God is love, and love is God. And when you represent Him, and you make decisions in love, you make decisions that help people, and you're getting

outside of yourself, to care about someone else and do for someone else, you have a quality of life and a joy and a peace that passes all understanding, as it says in the word of God.

My being reborn in Christ Jesus is probably the most significant event in my life. I think knowing Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior, is number one. And knowing the love of God, that He has just for me. And the sacrifice of His only begotten son, just for me. And the responsibility I have I feel is great to honor that. In all I do, in all I say, in my every being, and being that ambassador for His glory on this earth. It says, "Let your light so shine before men, so your Father in heaven will be glorified." I have faith in Him that He is going to provide all my needs according to His riches and glory. That's what He said. And that's the promise to me. Specifically to me. And so, I don't have to worry about all the arrows pointed my way. He says, "I will never leave you or forsake you. I will be your Protector, I will put a hedge of protection around you and your life." And so there should be nothing I fear. In anything.

God has given me so much favor. He has blessed me so much through so many people, that it's overwhelming. Sometimes I don't feel I'm deserving of so much that He's provided me with, but it gives me that much more charge and responsibility to do that much more. My last name is Steward, so that has more to do with a tremendous message that God I guess provided me with this great name to remind me of my responsibility to be a good steward over what He provides me with.

**Narrator:**

Our thanks to David Steward for sharing his story with us.

This month's Profile was produced by Pam Price; editor was Lane Denson. I'm Hilly Hicks and Profiles is brought to you by UMC.org, the official online ministry of The United Methodist Church, a ministry of United Methodist Communications.