



JUAN KESSLER

MISSIONARY TO
LATIN AMERICA

GRANDSON TO THE MAN WHO
ESTABLISHED ROYAL DUTCH
SHELL AS A GOING CONCERN

COSTA RICA

1. Giving Makes Money Your Servant, Not Your Master. “Giving has produced such blessings in my life,” says Juan. “My grandfather founded Royal Dutch Shell as a going concern. Giving has broken the power of money in my life. In the beginning, I was in a family where money was very important. Among the men, one could say their lives were dominated by money. But giving is the most wonderful antidote to that. Giving means that money loses its power over you. Rather than your master, it becomes your servant.”

“Giving has given me a clear conscience. There are people here in Latin America who speak against capitalists and rich people. They have every reason to do so because, unfortunately, rich people in general here are irresponsible and do little to help other people, especially the poor. But giving has given me a free conscience and no guilt about having some capital for myself because I have used it largely for other people.”

2. You Are Responsible. “Here’s a lesson I learned shortly after my conversion,” says Juan. “I gave a gift to an organization. Nine months later, I discovered the money was still there in their bank account. When I asked about it, they said, ‘Your business is to give. Once you give it’s our responsibility. You have nothing more to say about it.’”

Juan was not convinced that was right. He says, “I asked the Lord about it. The Lord said, ‘You are not responsible to see exactly how the money is used, but you are responsible to see that it’s used responsibly and correctly. If you give, you must follow up and keep in contact and make sure that your money has been used responsibly for the purpose for which it was intended.’” Juan has done that ever since.

“A foundation, with a good board, gives money more wisely than I did myself,” says Juan. “I therefore recommend setting up a foundation while one is still alive. I set up the Urco Foundation in the Netherlands in 1958 and the Ulting Overseas Trust

in Great Britain in 1987.”

3. Money Can Produce True (and False) Friends. Many givers struggle to discern between sincere and insincere friends. Juan’s experience offers some help.”

“I noticed that money has produced real friends,” says Juan. “It has also produced false friends. False friends are those who offer friendship hoping to get some help.

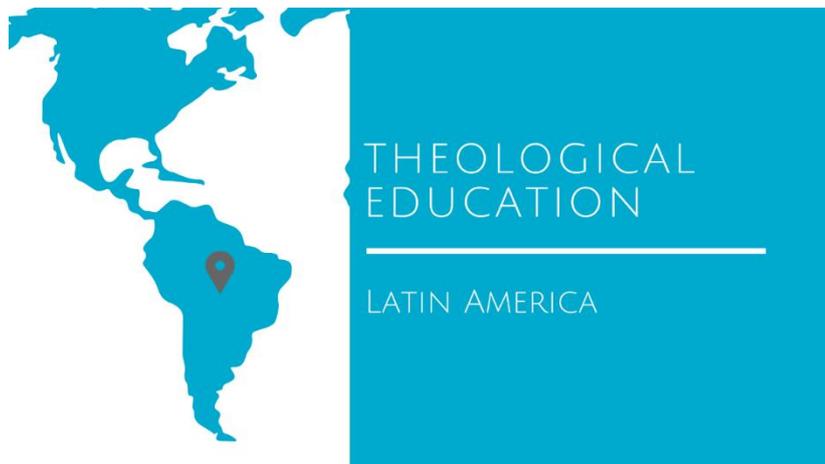
How does Juan tell the difference between real and false friends? Juan points out that false friends rarely give to others. “There are many ways to give,” says Juan, “You can give time, talents, service. A true friend will use any financial help that you give him and turn it into some form of help to other people.”

“You really notice the difference when suddenly you can’t help someone. When they are interested in receiving money all the time, that’s a sign.”

That’s one reason Juan encourages people to spread their giving around. “I concentrated my giving too much on one organisation and that went wrong,” says Juan. “I thought I was helping a Bible school. The man who had the vision for the Bible school was a very good evangelist, but he did not do well at all as the director of a Bible school. I was away in Peru.” Juan learned of the mismanagement upon his return to the Netherlands. “If I’d spread my giving a bit more, I would have avoided that.”

“But mostly money has produced some real sincere people who are not interested in their own interests but the work of the Lord. It has produced many friendships.”

Juan Kessler loves to give to...



“One of the best things you can do,” says Juan, “is support training of candidates for the ministry.” Juan knows first-hand the flight of pastors and missionaries in Latin America. In 1949, despite his family connections, Juan found himself living on \$35 per month as a missionary in Peru. How did he end up there?

“There was a person who came to Cambridge while I was still a student there. He gave a talk about India and it was very impressive. At the end he said, I’m going to make an appeal. I won’t ask if you’ll go as a missionary. But I’ll just ask “If the Lord should call you, are you prepared to go?” Juan says, “I thought, ‘I have to raise my hand. Several others raised their hands as well.’ Shortly after I read about Latin America as the neglected continent of missions.”

Juan noted that all the missionary stories he read spoke about Africa and India and China. “No one spoke about Latin America,” he says, “so I came to Latin America, to Peru.” Despite growing up with extra resources, in a family focused on money, Juan says, “At the beginning there was restriction on foreign exchange. I couldn’t get money to Peru. So I had to live off the mission allowance, which was \$45 per month.”

“When the restrictions were lifted,” says Juan, “I began to use my money to fund certain projects that I saw in Peru.”

His first-hand perspective as a missionary in Latin America shapes his passion for supporting theological education. “There are quite a few pastors here (in South America) who have had no proper theological training,” Juan says. “That leaves them open to all kinds of heresies like liberation theology and prosperity theology.”

Juan explains, “I say to those in the prosperity gospel, ‘One cannot buy God’s blessings.’ The idea that if you give generously to a television station or a church that God will therefore multiply your bank account, that is a false promise. The Lord is not obliged to do anything. All you can do is give a little back of the much he has given to us. That’s stated in Romans 11:35, right at the end of the chapter.”

To help young pastors develop their biblical theology, Juan says, “I love giving to support Bible schools and seminaries.” Laughing, he concludes, “Not too much to any one school, of course.”