

# Stewardship

## Be a Channel

*“Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.”*

*2 Corinthians 9:6*

A few months ago, my husband Jeff and I started cleaning out our extra bedroom. It had become a storage closet. Boxes were stacked from floor to ceiling. We decided it was time to sort through them and clear out some of the clutter.

Riffling through the rummage was fun to do. I found old photo's from my children's school days. I laughed at the picture of Tim with the circle of red Kool-Aid stain around his lips and remembered how mad I was about it back then. I came across tokens and awards the kids had won. As I lifted out sweaters hand-knit by their great-grandmother, tears came to my eyes when I saw the bears and bunnies they wore as infants. These were articles worth holding on to.

Then I got down to the nitty-gritty of things. I rummaged through items that I had packed away that were hardly used and still in good condition. Comforters, unused picture frames, knick-knacks of all sorts, filled a number of boxes. Kitchen gadgets, china with pretty pink flowers, and lamps with shades were found. It was time to clear out the clutter

and give these things to someone who could put them to good use.

As I carefully handled each item to pack them in the box, I was mindful that we need to be a channel rather than a reservoir. That we shouldn't hold on to things that we don't need when there are plenty of others in the world who could use them. I pondered how the Dead Sea is called “dead” because nothing flows from it. When we hold on to things rather than give them, we are in danger of become dead spiritually.

While I wrapped the breakable items in tissue paper, I recalled hearing that the word “miser” is the root word of miserable. God doesn't want us to hold on to everything, I said to myself. He wants us to experience the joy of giving rather than the misery of containing.

As I watched Jeff fold the flaps on the cardboard boxes, I thought about all the blessings that these items could

Continued on page 4...

*“Don't store up treasures here on earth where they can erode away or may be stolen. Store them in heaven where they will never lose their value and are safe from thieves.”*

*Matthew 6:19*





**H**ow much should we give? The Bible recommends tithing. And I like the expression, “first fruits of our labor,” as opposed to the modern thought of giving to God only whatever hasn’t been used to add to our own affluence. To take the first and the finest of what we have and give to God seems a much more worthy gift.

Certainly it brings that very Christianity into our homes. Tithing seems at first glance to be a gamble, and we may tell ourselves there are other places for our money. The children must be fed and clothed and educated. Yet, it is true that if we give to God, and let God come through with resources as we need them, we are not really gambling, but living close to faith itself. We are trusting God. And in tithing our trust is tested.

In tithing, the church ceases to be a structure of stone and steel and glass, and becomes an involvement of love for one another, and for all humanity. I don’t pretend to know why. I only know that total involvement in Christ’s humanity brings warmth and a feeling of strength that we very much need; that all people need.

That love is not a part of the past, but of the present. Christ said he would be with us always, but he did not say we would necessarily be with him. We may or may not be. But by our tithe, we make a decision for our Christianity.

When we tithe, we may give far more than we think is “sensible” to our

church. In no material way do we try to justify our actions, other than to admit that we cared enough to give. When one asks why it should be right, when there are so many other places for our money, the answers are so simple as to defy argument. We must never be lukewarm. We must be for God. 

## When God Requests a Candle

**F**or my 50<sup>th</sup> birthday, a friend let me borrow her hat – a two layer “cake” of stiff vanilla cloth, sitting on a top of a brim of blue velvet. On top, six red and white candles stood in rigid attention, topped with orange and yellow flames. If real and ignited, these candles would create a terrific blaze!

As I shared my hat with others, warm experiences filled my heart. My favorite was seeing the grin on my dad’s face, the silly hat on his head, as he blew out his real candles on his 75<sup>th</sup> and last birthday.

Continued on page 4...



*If only I had more, I would give more. How often we’ve all said that. St. Luke had something to say about this: “He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much” (Lk 16:10). If you aren’t giving sacrificially with what you have, you wouldn’t give sacrificially if you had more. How much you have has nothing to do with your generosity to God.*



## How Retired People Can Help

**A** former dress designer in St. Louis, 89, teaches health and physical education at a local Community Center.

In Utah, a 70-year-old woman reports “I am stone deaf and losing vision, but still yearn to be of use to others.” She is learning Braille to use her remaining sight in transcribing reading material for the blind-deaf.

Foster grandparents in New Mexico, ages 60 to 83, put in 20 hours a week helping children with learning disabilities grow in self-confidence, trust and health.

A 63-year-old mechanic in Upstate New York tells why he likes a program that employs older people to work with deprived children: “It’s hard to quit when you’ve worked all your life. I’m more interested in these kids than I ever thought I could be. My wife enjoys hearing me talk about my work and it’s making us both happier.”

An attorney, 66, devotes three hours a week in Minneapolis to reading technical bulletins to a sightless director of a society for the blind. “It was through the Christophers,” wrote the lawyer,

“that I got thinking about how to help others and how important it was even if it was just a little bit.”

In fact, the world over, thousands of retired people have served without salary in nearly 130 countries, thanks to the International Executive Service Corps. They lend assistance to private firms in underdeveloped areas. 

## Someone Busy

**A** business executive once told me that whenever she needed something important done, she would always choose “someone busy” to do it. She’d learned that busy people were the ones who had learned to use their time effectively. I asked her if that was fair. She answered, “Maybe not, but the work needs to be done.”

Sometimes it seems every church does the same thing as this executive. A few people seem to do everything: serving on committees, cleaning the church, and teaching Sunday school. Others may contribute in various ways, but not nearly as much. It’s the busy people that practice stewardship of time most effectively, which make them vital to the church’s good works.

Busy people deserve our respect, thanks, and most importantly, help. We shouldn’t wait to be asked; what work needs to be done isn’t a secret. If we join in, we may learn we can accomplish more than we thought, back when we weren’t so busy. 

*The immediate, almost natural, reaction to the prospect of serving on a church committee is, “I haven’t time.” Maybe it is a valid excuse. On the other hand, if it isn’t, who is to say you aren’t telling the truth? But do you honestly feel that the church members who are helping, necessarily have more time to give than those who aren’t?*





## Retired people rejoice in giving their time and talent all over the world.

Continued from page 1...

### Be a Channel...

bring to someone in need. I felt an enthusiasm over God's promise that it would flow back to us as we give into someone else's life.

After getting rid of a few things, my house feels lighter and so does my heart. 

Continued from page 2...

### When God Requests...

Then one day, my friend surprised me. "I need the hat back," she stated. "What?" I said. MINE! I thought. But, I had to return it, because it was hers. She had been kind to lend it to me in the first place.

After my next celebration this month, I'll mail it to her reluctantly - cloth layers, blue brim, six candles and all.

Also this month, I'll need to return something else. Our stewardship pro-

gram begins. Will I reluctantly return what God loaned me in the first place? Will I feel relieved that God doesn't ask for the entire hat? Will I refuse God one candle, when he leaves the remainder shining so brightly?

Our stewardship program is underway. Let's give with gratitude as our individual candles contribute to a blaze that brightens our community and warms the world beyond! 

