

On behalf of the Stewardship Ministry Team, thank you for your gifts of gratitude so far this year and for your continued grateful response to the many blessings God has given us individually and collectively.

(Ask SMT members to stand)

Some members of congregations have had the mistaken notion that the Stewardship Ministry Team is just a churchy title for the Fund Raising Committee. Nothing could be further from the truth. Stewardship is really about sharing with each other the words and concepts of Scripture that will teach us about God's abundant blessings and about our response to those blessings.

One of the most effective ways we learn about how to respond to God's grace is to share with each other our faith stories. In the coming year, the Stewardship Ministry Team would like to create opportunities for the members of this congregation to tell one another their "stewardship" stories. While some of these stories involve tithing, others just simply share how we have grown in our monetary expressions of gratitude. I have been asked to tell you our story as an example.

Many years ago our family adopted the habit of going to brunch after church. We had two sons and it seemed like a nice way to say "thank you" to Char for feeding us the rest of the week. One Sunday after we had eaten a wonderful brunch, the Holy Spirit shook me up and opened my eyes. As I signed the chit for brunch it dawned on me that the brunch bill was larger than the check we had written to the church and placed in the offering plate earlier that morning. I asked myself if brunch was more important to us than the gifts God had given our family including the amazing gift of His son who allows us to become heirs of his kingdom.

Intellectually, the answer was "of course not". God is more important than brunch. But our actions spoke louder than the words. I was reminded of the passage in Scripture that tells us that where our money is, there will our heart be also. It was a frightening and embarrassing moment. My beliefs and my behaviors were out of synch.

Beginning the next Sunday our monetary contribution to our church increased significantly and we still had money to pay the mortgage, save for college, buy clothes, and yes, go to brunch after church. More importantly we continued to challenge ourselves to do even more because our eternal life was far more important than our earthly possessions. Despite this growth, we know that we will be constantly challenged to do even more.

Many of you have even better stories to tell, but we don't know which of you are willing to share those stories in a public setting. If you are willing to share your stewardship story please tell me or any Stewardship Ministry Team member or contact me at

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Thanks for your attention and thanks to God for all he has done and continues to do for each and every one of us.