

Stewardship Minute
by Missy Patterson
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I have been asked to speak before you today about stewardship. I have to admit, when Janice first asked me to do this last year, I was stricken with fear and panic... so much so that I said "no." "Stewardship, the giving of time and money, I'm no expert on these" I thought. My idea of time management is filling the calendar with as many activities as possible and making sure I always get to the activities on time. And as far as money goes, I thought, how can I stand before the church and ask people to give more, when I wasn't sure if James and I could even meet our modest pledge that we had made the year before? And no, I do not balance my checkbook. Time and money management...I am no expert.

A new year, a new beginning and once again I found myself being called upon to share in stewardship Sunday. Time to grow up Missy, there must be something I can share, Janice seems to think so. I graciously accepted, and thank you Janice for this opportunity. You see what I discovered during this exercise was that yes, stewardship is about the giving of time and money, and giving back to the Lord what is His, but really what it is truly about is relationships. That's it. Simple but powerful relationships!

Let's take time for example. I said earlier, I love a full calendar and I love to volunteer. I love the word "yes" and it saddens me when I have to say "no." I'm a wife, a mother, a business owner, a massage therapist, a Deacon, a choir mother, a Sunday School teacher, a den mother, a friend, an aunt and a self proclaimed "volunteer-aholic" when it comes to my sons' school activities. What I have learned about time management is this: I can't be good at any of these things unless I go to the Lord first. If I don't feel called to engage in these activities, things will not go smoothly. Am I really being called to this duty? Where is my intention coming from? If it doesn't come from God, it isn't going to work.

We have all been there...stressed out, trying to meet deadlines, spread too thin, feeling like we are going to break if one more thing ends up on our plate. It's the feeling of busyness. With all of these things filling up our calendars, how on Earth can we make time to give back to the Lord? I'll tell you my little secret. I replace the feeling of being "busy" with the feeling of excitement over the opportunity to "engage." Webster's Dictionary says the definition of 'engage' is to pledge oneself, to participate, to interlock. Who doesn't want to be a part of an engaging relationship? And not just any relationship, one with GOD! This reminds me to fully participate and be aware of the awesome opportunities God has given me. I love to engage in the Neighborhood breakfast here Sunday mornings. I love to engage in Wheels on Sundays when my whole family gets up and starts the day off by giving a ride to those in need. I love engaging in flower delivery, the children's choir, holiday dinners, and with the children in art class after worship every week. I get to see so many friendly, familiar faces and build lasting relationships that are bound by God's love. When my calendar gets full, when I think I can't possibly do one

more thing, I remember that God has blessed me with an opportunity. God blesses me with these relationships and I am able to turn my time in to the gift of service.

Now let's talk about money. Money makes everyone a little uncomfortable; alright maybe a lot. It seems so personal when talking about money, especially in today's economy. How much we make, how much we give... what's your number? The learning for me didn't start until I took the focus off of just that, the whole number part of it. We are told in the Bible that we must tithe, which means one tenth. Well, I don't know about you but I am still working on that one tenth. What I have learned, and for me, yes, it is still a work in progress, is that it's really not about the number. What stewardship is about when it comes to money has nothing to do with the actual dollar amount you're giving, but the intention behind it. This brings us back to our relationships. When we put our relationship with God before anything else, we start to see the world through a different perspective. When we realize that all money is God's money, then we are going to feel the Calling of responsibility to handle it with care. When I know God is balancing my checkbook, I am going to put a lot more thought into the ways I am spending what's His. And we have to remember that finance is not just about money; The Bible deals with finances in time, talent and treasure. He has blessed us all with time on Earth, given us all different talents and to top it all off, He blessed us with the opportunity to handle His treasure and handle it with care! And so in closing I found a prayer that I would like to share. It's called **The Stewardship Prayer** and it is contributed by Marlaine Doige from Christ Lutheran Church in Glencoe MN.

Please pray with me:

God, I resolve to put You first in my life.

I recognize that You have blessed me with all that I have and all that I am.

As your steward, I resolve to sacrifice when necessary but always to do so out of a spirit of sincere love, just as your Son, Jesus, did for me.

I humbly accept the challenge to share from my means rather than from my excess.

I recognize that being a good steward is nothing more than being truly Christian.

Dear God, I resolve to be generous with my time, talent and treasure; giving in proportion to the gifts I have been given.

I commit myself to taking care of my body and all of creation.

I know there will be times when I will fail to be a good steward, but I pledge to keep on trying.

I will confidently live each day with a spirit of true peace and joy in knowing that I am doing Your will.

AMEN