



by Shaun Harris  
Oct. 25, 2009

My family I are still new to St Margaret's -- we have been attending here for about six months and have been getting involved where we can. Thank you all for the warm welcome you have given my family. We have been through some major transitions in the past couple of years. Due to job changes, we moved households three times in the past 18 months and our kids have changed schools twice. So, after 15 years of living in McKinney, TX and now adjusting to so many new faces and places, it is a blessing to finally find this church family and settle down. We are very grateful.

When asked if I would share my thoughts on stewardship this morning, the first thing that popped into my mind was dollars (money?) and then I said, "Maybe, let me think about it." I am an engineer by trade. I deal with the conservation of energy -- sum of forces should equal zero and so forth. The bottom dollar is my first reaction to most everything. So I thought about it. I prayed about what God wanted me to share with you. His reply was to recall where I started in my adult life and how I got to where I am now.

Early in our marriage I was enlisted in the Navy, and my wife, Lisa, and I were having the typical difficulties of a young couple making ends meet on an enlisted salary. We had some intense discussions on if we should commit to tithing or not? Should we pledge or not? After all, I really

# *Giving with Gratitude*

wanted that spiffy stereo in the BX. Some years we did pledge and some years we didn't. It was difficult. It was not the most spiritual time of our lives.

However, things changed for good one fall during a stewardship campaign, as we were trying to quickly duck out through the Narthex, and the priest, bless his heart, caught up with us and asked if I had filled out a pledge card. I replied we had not and were not sure if we could. He told me to pray about it and submit the card even if all we could commit to was \$1. Then he told me to pray about my time and talent for they were equally important to the ministries of the church. So we submitted our card with a low amount I was confident we could meet through the year. We also considered our time and talent.

Lisa and I kept our pledge and volunteered where we thought we could help. Sounds grand, huh? Well, they were mostly the jobs no one else at our parish wanted. I changed light bulbs, cleaned carpet stains, mowed the lawn, and cleaned the bathrooms. It needed to be done, I could do it and I made the time. This led to being on committees and outreach teams in the parish community. Later, it meant forming a church little league baseball team so we could all fellowship regularly three times a week at the ballpark and the kids could learn about good sportsmanship, playing as a team, and how to have fun. Years later we were heavily involved with our parish vestry, building committee, Altar Guild, finance committee, stewardship committee, nursery committee, VBS, youth group, and many other smaller time investments in the life of our parish. It was not always fun but somehow, somehow, we always received more back than we

gave -- sometimes in the warm, friendly conversation of a parish dinner circle or other moments like holding hands with our brothers and sisters in Christ in prayer after 911.

We came to realize the importance of God being the foundation of our lives and home. In the midst of raising our family and being so involved in the life of our parish, Lisa was diagnosed with cancer. In a moment, our lives changed in ways we had never considered. But even in that time of health crisis, we were reminded daily of God's love and blessings toward us. The experience during that time strengthened our family, our faith, and demonstrated to us even more how important we all are to God and to each other in good times and in crisis.

Stewardship of mind, body and spirit as well as committing ourselves to God in decisions of time, finances, and volunteering became even more apparent to us.

Today, our cup runneth over. And after serving on the finance and budget committees, I have to say I understand now why a pledge card, with even a \$1 total commitment is important to the budgeting process. I have a new appreciation of what giving of time and talent is also. Somewhere along the way, the giving of time, talent, and treasure has become an essential part of our daily faith walk with God as well as a way for us to demonstrate how He blesses us.

I'm so glad I was put on the spot so many years ago -- what a difference it has made in my life and the lives of my family. Please prayerfully consider your pledge and be ready for your cup to runneth over too.



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