

# Stewardship

Jesus told a very interesting story about bags of gold. An owner was going away on a trip, called his servants and put his capital into their hands. One person was given five bags of gold, while another received two bags, and another person was handed but one bag of gold. Here the story sharpens, for it says “each according to his capacity.”

We all know the story, for it is one of the most familiar parables of Christ, the end being what each did with what he had been given. To those who used well what they had been given, there was praise, but to the man who did nothing but hide what he had been given, there was harsh condemnation!




## *What is your talent and what are you doing with it?*

Each one of us has been given personal “bags of gold,” but of varying amounts. The issue is not how much we’ve been given, but what we do with what we’ve received.

How much do you have? What are you doing with how little or how much you’ve been given? These disturbing questions are for each one of us. God has created each one of us with some talents. Such is the wonder and mystery of God’s creative activity that each human being is precious and unique and given some talents that others do not possess.

This week, look seriously at yourself

and ask, “What bag of gold has God given me ... and what am I doing with it?”

One major part of our growing up in Christ as whole people is the discovery of our own strengths and how we might use them to glorify God and help others. You have been given something of great worth. What is it and what are you doing with it? 

*When God gives us life, we don't know how much time we have to use. But whatever time we have is a gift from God and we must use it wisely, in every activity throughout the day.*




## Pastor John's musing...



**M**y eyes stopped suddenly on a sentence I read the other day. “Those who can be thankful only for prosperity are forever threatened by adversity” (Allen W Clark). To live in the Spirit of Christ endows you and me with the capacity to live thankful lives despite our circumstances. How I wish more of us really understood this. The companionship of Christ ... whether traveling along the bright hilltops of life or through dark valleys filled with failure, sorrow, and challenge ... undergirds our whole outlook and approach to life. God yearns for us to find our joy, our satisfaction, our needs ... fulfilled, not in material things and prosperity, but in God. The loss of prosperity, and indeed the disappointing search for it, can ruin any deep sense of thanksgiving. “Those who can be thankful only for prosperity are forever threatened by adversity.”

As Thanksgiving Day approaches, take time to think about your reasons for being thankful. How deep are they?

*Perhaps you will want to take this season to accept more fully God's companionship as your richest possession. Worship God with a thankful heart. *

## Tithing Changed My Life

**I** am about to deliver myself as a spiritual witness, something that isn't often done, but something that I feel needs to be done more and more.

I am a convicted tither and I have been serving time for this since 1987! If that is said in just the right way, it brings a few chuckles and that leads us to the point of my witness.

In my junior year in college, I really began grappling with the Lord, trying to learn how to turn over my life to him in new ways and discover what that means. It turned out to mean a lot of things ... going to church regularly because I wanted to, starting to learn more about Holy Scripture because I wanted to, associating regularly with Christian community groups, taking responsibility for Christian programs on the college campus, discussing with my Bishop the possibilities of ordination and, lo and behold, finding a spiritual claim upon my wallet ... becoming a tither.

I cannot remember the first time I heard about tithing, about giving 10 percent of my income for the work of the church. I suspect I got the message subliminally, probably unintentionally on the part of the sender, from my regular exposure to Sunday school and church worship as a boy. I say unintentionally because I am not aware that tithing was ever a part of church life, either practice or teaching, in my formative years.

But, in any event, tithing burst upon my life as a college junior and it seemed very right for me. From my allowance and the monies I earned with a student job, I set aside 10 percent most weeks for the work of the church. Sometimes I miscalculated in the new discipline

Continued on page 3...

*Thanksgiving must be continuous. A regular contribution to the church is a personal manner of religious thanksgiving because we act by faith, acknowledge God's generosity, and enliven our interest in the Giver of all gifts.*

*We can realize more deeply the active presence of God and God's goodness when we are continually thankful in our daily lives.*

---

## Mena's Gift

---

**M**ena Uber takes the parable of the talents seriously. A generous, warmhearted, eighty-year-old widow, Mena calls herself “a recycled teenager.” On a fixed income, which requires her to “pinch her pennies twice,” she still finds a way to give what she has to God.


Since 2001, she's given her house. To the passerby, it looks like an old, two-story, white, wood-framed house, which her late husband, Herman, fashioned from a small barn over forty years ago. It's what Mena does with it that's so remarkable.

She uses her two spare bedrooms to give free, temporary, room and board to furloughed, traveling missionaries, referred to her by her church or friends. She serves them home cooking. Sometimes she takes them on tours of local sights in her car, “Smokey.”

So far, she's temporarily housed 58 missionaries from 16 countries. “Some

of them stay for only a meal; others stay from overnight to up to a week. One friend nicknamed my place “Mena's Global Bed and Breakfast.”

Her experiences have taught her a person can't out-give God. She has four shoe boxes and a briefcase overflowing with missionaries' personal correspondence postmarked from around the world. She credits her missionary guests with making her later years an adventure. “Through my missionaries, I've traveled throughout the world. I've seen customs of different lands firsthand without leaving the town I was born in,” Mena said. “I've learned how Christians are very much alike, no matter where they live.”

In her guest book, a page written and signed by Zeke, from Zimbabwe, sums up the stewardship ministry of Mena's Global Bed and Breakfast: “We thank you for bringing Christ to us in a living form.” 

---


...Continued from page 2

### Tithing Changed My Life...

and slipped ... other times I could go for a number of weeks and do it right. Since that time, for the last 35 years, I have continued to have the blessing of tithing in my personal life. I say “blessing” because, for me, it is a blessing. Because I set aside a tenth of my income specifically for the purposes of God through his church, I find that my possessions cannot exercise a tyranny over me.

Material things seldom provoke any anxiety in me. Money, the making of it and the accumulation of it, is not a significant issue in my life. But, I'll tell you a secret: I am afraid I would

have a lot of trouble with possessions and money if it were not for the blessing of tithing. I am, at heart, greatly concerned with what I have and what I own and what I do with it and what will happen to it. The blessing of tithing in my life is that it provides an appropriate tension between my natural acquisitiveness and the way I feel God wants me to view everything he has given me.

So, my witness is that tithing has changed my life and the change has been present for a long, long time. I shudder to think of how grasping I might be or how stingy I might be toward others if it were not for this biblical principle doing the wonderful work of the Spirit within me. 

*A missionary in Africa taught converts to tithe. Early one morning, a man came to his door with a fine fish, explaining it was his tithe. “You must have done well,” said the missionary, “if you already caught ten fish.” “No,” said the African. “This is the only one I've caught so far. I'm going now to catch the other nine.” Giving a tenth of our income to church and charity is an ideal. Perhaps too much for some, too little for others. But it is a benchmark worth striving for!*



“Mena’s Global Bed and Breakfast”

---

## Steward of the Month

---

**A Doll Bed for His Sister**      Submitted by: Betty, Fayetteville, NC

**U**sing scrap lumber, six-year-old Mark attempted to construct a doll bed for his sister. She’d saved and purchased a doll, but had nothing left to buy a bed.

“I’ll make one for you!” Mark eagerly offered. He made some progress with it until he tried to attach the legs. “I could make it stand up,” Mark pleaded with his mother, “if you’d just let me use Dad’s electric screwdriver!”

Mark had two things going right in his project: He had a willing heart. He knew the right tool to use, because he’d watched his talented father use that screwdriver numerous times. But Mark didn’t comprehend his own inability to use an electric screwdriver.

As Christians, we too are builders. We build bridges of relationships and understanding, highways for worship and Christian education, avenues of service and caring.

Like Mark, the first thing needed in Christian building is a willing heart. The second is the right tool. But these God-sized projects are also too big to do by ourselves, so we ask for help.

In Christian building, we don’t rely on our own strength alone. We place our churches, communities, and our very lives into God’s hands. There, we can become God’s tools. Our strength, talents, treasures, time, and creativity are then used by our heavenly Father, the most skillful craftsman of all. 