

# Feasting on Gratitude

## Stewardship Reflection Series

*Everything is ready, come to the banquet...*



Jesus saw table fellowship as part of his divine task. He took his cue from a long line of prophets--who were often hungry and malnourished themselves--and pointed to the great feast as a sign of God's generosity, goodness, and the promise of life abundant. In God's Kingdom there is not just enough, there is more than enough.

When my wife and I were young and were asked by the stewardship committee to pledge to our church, we weren't sure how to respond. Like many young couples, we lived paycheck to paycheck. We were so strapped for money that we carried a half-full bottle of Coke when we visited friends because we could not afford to purchase and bring along a full bottle. Now we were expected to make a pledge to our church and stretch our thin budget even thinner?

We did make a pledge and quickly found that our pledge just added to our struggles. When it came time to pay our pledge, there just wasn't enough money to go around--that is until we decided to become first-fruit givers, giving to the church first before we paid the bills. With that simple decision, we found that the ends actually did meet. Not that we had money left over at the end of the month; we didn't. But we did find that our financial commitments were taken care of. Bills got paid and we always had food on our table. Giving was no longer a struggle but a goal and, as we could, we would increase that goal. Within a few short years, we reached our tithing level.

As we grew in the church, as we grew older, and as we grew to be more independent, we found that we have more available to us. We also discovered that no matter what we gave--whether to the church, a charitable organization, disaster relief, or to someone who is just down on their luck--our charity has always been returned to us in some way. Even when we struggle over whether or not to give to a certain cause, once we make the decision, the return is almost immediate. The returns we have received have been many and varied, including good news about a family member, the end to a long and difficult struggle, or simply the warm and heartfelt thanks from the recipients, the most rewarding gift imaginable.

My wife and I have never regretted a contribution nor have we regretted our pledge to the church. We have come to realize that we are blessed in many ways and what we have is not ours to keep. It is ours to share in the same way God shares with us, freely and unconditionally. We are only stewards of God's gifts to us. Let go and more gifts will follow.

### Reflection Questions

1. How is giving a sign of trusting in God's goodness and generosity?
2. When have you experienced joy in your giving?
3. How have you been blessed by sharing the gifts entrusted to you?



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