

Mike Henry – Stewardship Moment 2016

Stewardship.

Let me be completely honest. I wasn't sure regarding the definition of stewardship. I googled it. About 29 million results in .96 seconds. I scanned the first five or six results and found this:

"Stewardship is about being grateful, responsible stewards of the gifts we receive from God."

This I understand.

One of my favorite quotes is:

"Our talents are the gifts that God gives to us... What we make of our talents is our gift back to God".

So, for me, stewardship is about our Time, Talents and Treasure, a concept I'm familiar with.

Let me give you an example: I have a certain amount of mechanical ability. I don't know if it's a talent or a gift but I can fix just about anything from cars to cameras. I'm pretty much fearless when it comes to attempting repairs. I distinctly remember trying to repair an old non-working stand-up console radio when I was about 10. It was in our basement. I was barefoot on the concrete floor with my hand in the inner workings of the radio when I got hold of a live wire. I eventually fixed that radio. I didn't tell my parents.

So, how does that relate? I'm a supporter of the Green Apple Bike program. I think it's fabulous that Manhattan has a bike program that's totally free and available to everyone and I help repair the flat tires, broken rims and bent handlebars when they come into the repair shop. I'll spend six to eight hours a week to keep Green Apple Bikes on the street.

I also volunteer with Second Helping. Evidently I have a "gift" when it comes to washing dishes.

Up until when we started attending here I wasn't going to church. Sixteen years ago I stumbled onto a spiritual path but I didn't attend church. I had a kind of do-it-yourself religion. I was not impressed with organized religion. I lumped all denominations together as hypocritical, money grubbing businesses.

Rita had attended a Congregational Church as a child and started attending here shortly after we moved here five years ago. I came just to see what had her excited because she hadn't been attending a church either. I remember the first Sunday I took communion. I thought "Are you serious??" I don't have to jump through any hoops? I don't have to believe any dogma, everyone is welcome? I felt like I had come home.

Yesterday I asked my youngest daughter what Stewardship meant. I just wanted to make sure I was on the right path. She said, "Managing something that isn't ours". In other words, "Stewarding our gifts".

There's some great stuff in 1st Corinthians regarding spiritual gifts. "There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work." He goes on and on and on and I'm not going to so it starts in First Corinthians 12 if you want to read it.

If I need any further clarification of the definition of stewardship all I need to do is look at the history of this church. Like the denomination to which we belong, our local congregation has a history of civil and ecclesiastic inclusiveness. For over 150 years countless members of this congregation have kept the doors open and the lights on so that today, we can gather and share our beliefs and our time talents and treasure. And for that I thank them and I thank you!

So I feel like I have my Time and Talent covered. What about my Treasure, my contributions to the church?

So I give to the church. But I think the question is: Why This Church? Let me tell you another story. I quit going to church about 20 years ago. Then, one day about 15 years ago I stumbled onto a spiritual path but I still wasn't attending any church. It was kind of do-it-yourself religion. I was not impressed with organized religion. I lumped all denominations together as hypocritical, etc. I used this attitude as a reason not to attend church. We share the same values. I'm not a flag waving, card carrying protester on any subject but that doesn't mean I don't have deep convictions regarding equality, human rights and social justice. So we needed to find a church where we were comfortable not only with church doctrine but the people, the congregation. And, here we are.

It's been like coming home for both of us.

When we can worship with people who share our core beliefs. Quite frankly I didn't think we'd ever find a church that shared our values like this one does. We've belonged to different churches. And certainly not in Kansas!

So, let's go back to my Google definition and see how I did.

"Stewardship is about being grateful, responsible stewards of the gifts we receive from God."

In the event I miss anything the church helps me.

Pursuit of peace, justice, understanding, and the values we profess in our mission statement

Love Unconditionally.

Challenge Spiritually.

Minister Fervently

We've all been blessed in different ways. These gifts, these blessings are simply on loan to us.

Let's talk about the church a minute. Specifically this church.