

Listening to My Father...

Karl, member of
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I am delighted to join you this morning. Generally I attend these morning services remotely...listening to them in the Creekside kitchen as I often prepare the meal for the evening Creekside Crossings worship service. While that is always an interesting experience, I miss seeing all of you... the people... the community that forms this amazing church.

It's been over two years since Pastor Mark asked me to consider joining the Stewardship team. With literally no experience I continue to wonder why he asked me to share this position. In fact, at the time, I had little understanding of what stewardship really meant.

Certainly, though it had become a very important part of my life, I had little or NO prior training in the concept of giving.

I wonder... where does one learn such a fundamental lifetime value?

I have spent some time lately to try and better understand the inspiration that motivates me today to give as much as I possibly can to others.

My search started with my upbringing as a child. Though I grew up in the wealth of Los Altos, my family was relatively poor in financial terms. Actually, measured a different way, my mother was wealthy beyond compare; she had spirit, energy, and a nurturing soul. But, sadly, my father was a different story.

My father, Edwin, was born in 1922, abandoned by his mother in 1923, and then meagerly reclaimed by her ten years later. He grew up in a spiritual vacuum; there was little or no love, no compassion, no sharing, and certainly no concept of giving to others. His mother and her eventual seven husbands led a life of self indulgence, often leaving my father in a remote 24 hour childcare environment for weeks at a time.

As a parent, my father was at a disadvantage as a role model from the very start. As a family, for my mother, brother and me, there was very little nurturing from my father... we certainly never attended church together; in fact, I have no recollection of ever even going out to dinner together as a family.

The lessons of stewardship that I learned from my father were simple: he never gave a penny of support to anyone or anything. I can't imagine trying to discuss the idea of Extravagant Generosity with him, as I know he would have been lost by the concept.

My father passed away ten months ago while our family was on the Mexico mission trip. He died here in Los Altos... penniless and in many ways empty and alone.

During these past ten months since losing him I have come to love my father in a way that I never knew possible. I have also felt the power of God working within my heart, teaching me in a way that I couldn't have possibly imagined.

Many of us here this morning have felt the pain of neglect or even abuse. Some of us are still scarred by this, but others have had time to heal and to witness the message in the healing process, as I have. The Holy Father has great aspirations for each and every one of us. The ultimate lessons that my father's life and death taught me were truly heaven sent.

Still amongst us there are those who do not know what is right, or who have been robbed of the ability to give or to truly share their spirit! Yet, there are a far greater number of us who have been blessed with the ability to give not only of our time and our financial resources, but our love for one another.

And so, for those who are still wondering how you might learn life's lessons about stewardship, I invite you to listen – listen with an open heart, and I assure you that sooner or later you will hear what the Holy Father has been whispering since that day that He opened your eyes to love and to the joy of giving to another.

You will find that “the gift is in the giving,” and that stewardship is not a task or an obligation, but rather a sacred privilege that God has shared with you... and with me!

Amen