

I've come to learn that over time different experiences changed my outlook on life. When I was young, gifts at Christmas were important. Now I wouldn't mind if I didn't receive something to open. Getting older used to make me dread my birthdays--until I lost my dad to diabetes and heart disease and my aunt to breast cancer. I'm learning to appreciate my time here. They don't have any birthdays to celebrate, and I do. My daughter did not have a heart beat and was rushed into surgery at delivery. Everything worked out and she is now 14 and healthy. The students I teach have disabilities, and some were caused by complications at delivery. These are just a few experiences that changed my life. I do have many blessings and many gifts. This awareness did not come overnight or out of the blue, nor does my journey in faith. Conversion is an ongoing way of life.

I've been a member of this parish for over 20 years. I attend mass every week and holy days, but have not been that involved in spending much time and talent in the church. My life is pretty busy as a wife--cooking, cleaning; a mom running three kids around to various school activities and athletic events; and working full-time as a special ed. teacher. When asked to give of my time, talent and treasure, it was asking a lot, but was I just making excuses?

For the past year and a half, I've been a member of the stewardship committee. At these committee meetings I've learned that "once one chooses to become a disciple of Jesus Christ, stewardship is not an option". The three convictions include:

1. A conscious, firm decision to be a follower of Jesus Christ.
2. Conversion or change of mind and heart that is not in a single action or nor of a period of time, but in an entire way of life.
3. Stewardship is an expression of discipleship with the power to change how we understand and live out our lives.

Do I have all the answers? NO! Our faith is a mystery and I am exploring and learning as I go. It is a process of being open and willing to change. Thus, I was making excuses not being more active and giving of my time and talent. I am truly blessed with many wonderful gifts. Many gifts I took for granted. Knowing I would be nothing and have nothing without God. I found time to be more active in the church. Besides being on the stewardship committee, I am an Extraordinary minister of Holy Communion. I'm inviting you to join our mission to serve others and make stewardship your way of life.

As to giving more of my treasure, I had resistance. Did you hear what I just said "my treasure". It's not mine. It's God's. Knowing this doesn't make it easier, again I was trying to justify why I can't. My family lives off the income I earn as a teacher. My husband has not had a career for a few years. He's gone back to school and earns some money cutting lawns, removing snow, and painting. He'll be sitting for his boards within the next month and a half. Paying for schooling and these exams are expensive.

We are very conservative and have saved at a very young age, thus have no mortgage. However, just the cost of living (food, gas for our cars, utilities, and necessities take up my check). With this being said, we have never been without. Sure there are things my family wants, but we have what we need. I have increased our weekly contribution and trust God will provide for us as he always has.

My closing remarks end with another life changing experience. You may have guessed it, the time my children and I have with my husband because he is home. Neither he nor I had foreseen our lives unfold like it has. But that is what we have come to appreciate. We are not in control, we are passengers in this journey and we are

letting God drive or lead us. God's ways are not our ways. He has a plan that may not always be our plan.

Some of you may be sitting out there with reasons why you can't give of your time, talent or treasure, I did too. Trust that God will give you all you need! If you believe this, then it's not an option you are a steward of God and must share your gifts with others! Thank you for listening and may God continue to bless each of you and your loved ones!