


MARCH 2015

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 9:30 Worship: Communion; Food/Toiletries Collection 11 Sunday School; Life Recovery 12 Hospice Flowers 7 AA	2 9 Hospice Flowers 5 Exercise Class 6 Brd of CE Mtg 7:30 NA	3 9 Hospice Flowers 10 NA 5 Exercise Class	4 11 Women's Bible St. 1 NA 3 Staff Meeting 7 Bell Choir 8 AA	5 5 Exercise Class 7 Sr. Choir	6 7 Al-Anon 7:30 NA	7 8 Exercise Class 6:45 R.U.N. 8 AA
8 9:30 Worship 11 Sunday School; Life Recovery 12 Brd of CM Meeting 5:30 Missions Pot Luck Supper 7 AA	9 5 Exercise Class 7:30 NA	10 10 NA 5 Exercise Class 6:30 Diaconate Mtg. 7 Trustees Meeting	11 11 Women's Bible St. 1 NA 7 Bell Choir 8 AA	12 COPY DUE AFB 5 Exercise Class 7 Sr. Choir	13 7 Al-Anon 7:30 NA	14 8 Exercise Class 6:45 R.U.N. 8 AA
15 9:30 Worship 11 Sunday School; Life Recovery 1:30 NYPenn Intergroup 7 AA	16 5 Exercise Class 7:30 NA	17 10 NA 5 Exercise Class 7 Advisory Council	18 11 Women's Bible St. 1 NA 7 Bell Choir 8 AA	19 5 Exercise Class 7 Sr. Choir	20 7 Al-Anon 7:30 NA	21 8 Exercise Class 6:45 R.U.N. 8 AA
22 VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION SUN. 9:30 Worship: 11 Sunday School; Life Recovery 7 AA	23 5 Exercise Class 7:30 NA	24 10 NA 4 Newsletter Comm 5 Exercise Class	25 11 Women's Bible St. 1 NA 7 Bell Choir 8 AA	26 5 Exercise Class 7 Sr. Choir	27 7 Al-Anon 7:30 NA	28 6:45 R.U.N. 8 AA
29 9:30 Worship: Cantata 11 Sunday School; Life Recovery 7 Youth Overnighter 7 AA 	30 5 Exercise Class 7:30 NA	31 10 NA 12 Bach's Lunch @ St. Mary's 5 Exercise Class	April 1 11 Women's Bible St. 1 NA 7 Bell Choir 8 AA	2 Maundy Thurs 5 Exercise Class 7 Maundy Thurs Service	3 Good Friday Cross Walk	4 8 Exercise Class 6:45 R.U.N. 8 AA

A STEWARDSHIP EXPERIENCE By Deb Wuethrich

As Pastor Dan and other leaders discussed stewardship pledges over the past several weeks, I couldn't help recalling a time not too long ago that I had an encounter at my previous church in Michigan that virtually changed my outlook.

After my husband's death and the closing of a church we had been attending, I accepted an invitation from friends to accompany them to their church. Soon, I became engaged in a series of classes offered as part of a membership path. As I sat in a room with others one Sunday afternoon, I browsed the workbook for a class on "Discovering Spiritual Maturity." In the very back of the book was a Partnership Agreement form to sign that included a commitment to give a regular tithe of 10 percent of my income to God. "Here we go!" I could hear myself groaning from within. I felt trapped. It wasn't that I hadn't heard of the concept before. I believed my husband and I gave as generously as we could, but even though I knew he gave 10 percent of any contract work he was fortunate enough to land as a self-employed consultant, I just didn't think we could "afford" to tithe. I had also always been uncomfortable when pastors had to give their annual stewardship talks because I knew the percentage subject would come up. As the class started, I was busy trying to figure out a way to gracefully exit the program. After all, I wasn't feeling so good, especially after noting the subject to be discussed. But as the class progressed, we talked about things like understanding discipleship and that included four habits: time with God's word, prayer, fellowship — and yikes! — tithing. A verse was noted: "The purpose of tithing is to teach you to always put God first in your lives." (Deuteronomy 14:23 TLB)

Soon, I noted not just one, but eight reasons in God's word that answered the question, "Why tithe?" 1) because God commands it (Leviticus 27:30); 2) because Jesus commanded (Matthew 23:23); 3) tithing demonstrates that God has first place in my life (the aforementioned verse in Deuteronomy); 4) tithing reminds me that everything I have was given to me by God (Deuteronomy 8:18); 5) tithing expresses my love to the Lord (Psalm 116:12, Deuteronomy 16:17); 6) God says that refusing to tithe is stealing from Him (Malachi 3:8-10) — that one got me pretty good — and, 7) tithing gives God a chance to prove that He exists and wants to bless you (Malachi 3:10), and 8) a chance to prove I love God (John 14:15).

The stealing part hit a nerve, because I wanted to serve God and be faithful, not be guilty of "robbing" God. But it was Malachi 3:10 that kept crossing my mind in the class, "Bring your whole tithe to My storehouse. TEST ME IN THIS," says the Lord, "AND SEE IF I WILL NOT THROW OPEN THE FLOODGATES OF HEAVEN AND POUR OUT SO MUCH BLESSING THAT YOU WON'T HAVE ROOM ENOUGH FOR IT!" The lesson ended with recommendations to give with the right attitude: willingly, cheerfully, sacrificially, and expectantly ("Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will reap generously" 2 Corinthians 9:6).

I didn't know if whoever put together the workbook was just really good at spelling things out, or if it was just my time, but the Holy Spirit convicted me. I signed the document, not knowing how I would obey it, but resolving that I would. When I wrote the next week's check, I gulped and fretted a bit, but then remembered not only was I to give it, but it was to be willingly, cheerfully, sacrificially, *expectantly*.

"Okay, God," I finally whispered. "I'm going to trust you." And I felt good about it.

Now I don't know what happens to others when they make such commitments to obey God, but about a week later, I received a large check that was "above and beyond" what had already been distributed from my mother's estate. A few days later, an unexpected stock dividend arrived. Other financial blessings also appeared, and with them, a reminder in my spirit: "Test me on this."

I know it's very difficult for us to part with "our" money (as well as time commitments and other talents), and we often can't see how doing so can possibly work out for us. But I wish I had done this years ago. I am only grateful that God led me to "His way" in that membership class, convicting me to obey, even though I didn't know how I would make it work.

In my move back to New York to be near family, I faced several financial challenges in order to make it all happen, the most recent being a surprise need to replace the heating system and gas lines in my newly purchased house to the tune of almost \$10,000. But I am grateful to say that God led me through all of that, opening the floodgates, including the use of some things He had put in place through my husband's faithfulness and investing prior to his death. In the end, "Each one should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under pressure" (2 Cor. 9:7) and it is good to pray for your own circumstances. But I can now give testimony that as we obey and invest for eternity, God will provide. It's a promise He's left in His Word for all believers.