

Hi, my name is Michael Springer and this is my wife Amy. We have three wonderful children, Isaiah, our first grader; Gabriel, whose 5 years old; and Hannah, who will be 2 on Valentine's Day. We are also expecting our fourth little one in June. We joined Good Shepherd in 2002, and both completed the RCIA process in Spring 2003. I was both baptized and confirmed during the Easter Vigil Service along with my wife's confirmation. Good Shepherd has provided answers to so many of our questions, as well as encouraged us to ask questions of ourselves. One of which was about stewardship.

We were encouraged to take the Crown financial ministries course offered through Good Shepherd which gave a great understanding of what stewardship means. Now the dictionary states that stewardship means the management of another's property, finances or other affairs. But our faith make this definition take on such a deeper meaning. First, we ask whose properties and such are we in charge of; this question is answered in:

1 Chronicles 29:11

Yours, O LORD, are grandeur and power, majesty, splendor, and glory. For all in heaven and on earth is yours; yours, O LORD, is the sovereignty; you are exalted as head over all.

So then God has put us in charge of a portion of his properties, finances and other affairs. Now what has He called us to do as stewards, Jesus gives us the best definition of a good and faithful steward in this scripture:

Matthew 22:37-39

He said to him, "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

More or less, stewardship is a way of loving the Lord wholly with your time, talent and treasure. It allows us to willingly choose to share of ourselves physically, spiritually and morally for God's glory.

Today, Father Foley has asked us to share our faith journey in reference to stewardship of treasure.

Now, here came the real challenge for our family: see ignorance in stewardship of treasure is one thing, but once God had revealed to us what

(Amy's part in italics and Michael's part in regular)

he is asking of our family, we now had the choice to receive his instructions or be disobedient. Our choice was to be willing. That seemed like the easy part. But there was still a lot of lessons along the journey of obedience.

As you realize, we're a fairly young couple with little ones to feed, clothe and entertain. After choosing to be willing, many doubts and questions crept in to shake our decision. Could we do all that God would possibly ask of us, and take care of our family, keep Amy as a stay at home mom, pay the mortgage, car payment and have any sort of fun money. How much will God want and can't I wait until the end of the month to ensure all our needs are met. Control is a very hard thing to relinquish, and even harder to accept that you never had control in the first place.

Another version of 1 Chronicles 29:11, says everything in the heavens and earth is yours, O Lord, and this is your kingdom. So basically I had to realize that I had no control over our finances or needs because everything was being provided by the grace of God. Now as far as trying to hold out until the end of the month, God spoke loudly through this scripture:

Deuteronomy 26:10

Therefore, I have now brought you the first fruits of the products of the soil which you, O LORD, have given me. And having set them before the LORD, your God, you shall bow down in his presence.

First fruits... I am supposed to give God his portion first, and not only first but in reverence. I can't clinch onto the envelope fearing its release into the basket or begrudgingly write the check on the way to mass. God wants me to give with a happy heart confident in His ability to take care of all of our needs.

Now the next challenge, will he provide for our needs for the rest of the month, according to Malachi he promises just that:

Malachi 3:10

Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, That there may be food in my house, and try me in this, says the LORD of hosts: Shall I not open for you the floodgates of heaven, to pour down blessing upon you without measure?

The imagery of this scripture is just magnificent. I can just see the joy on

(Amy's part in italics and Michael's part in regular)

God's face as he pours his abundant love upon our household. And I can honestly attest to this promise. We are not suddenly wealthy because we chose to tithe, but I am still at home enjoying the children. We have never missed a mortgage payment, in fact, we're diligently trying to pay it off early to avoid debt. We are the happy owners of our van which is debt-free. Everyone is clothed and fed and content in God's care. I have even noticed that Michael's concerns about providing for his family are replaced with peace in knowing our Heavenly Father is provided better than we could have ever imagined.

I would like to challenge each and every one here today to ask God to speak to you about how you are using your gifts of time, talent and treasure and be willing to answer his call. I end with this scripture as a plea and prayer to God on our behalf:

1 Peter 4:10

As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace.

Thank you and God bless you on your journey of faith.