

Dear friends,

I am grateful for the opportunity to communicate some thoughts about engaging in ministry by sharing of time, talent and gifts. Our scriptures have many references to this. One of the earliest accounts is that of Abraham offering a tenth of his possessions to the high priest Melchizedek, and receiving his blessing. In the New Testament we see the early church providing for each other's needs in the book of Acts. One account tells of Barnabas selling land to provide needed funds. I have to admit that this topic can be sometimes difficult to talk about, especially in the context of the church. Unfortunately, it can fit the stereotype of the church as "always asking for money". It's funny that after a restaurant meal we don't grouse about having to actually pay for it. We accept the price of "being fed". I have found it helpful to look at sharing in the faith context in the same way. We are nurtured in countless ways, whether it's the music experience, the pastor's sermon, or literally nurtured by a pot pie feast. This takes all of us, just as in the early church.

Linda and I consider it a privilege to share in ministry and to give of our resources. We have tried to stay faithful to that path since we first came to Cornwall in '79. In the early years of child rearing and limited funds, our contribution was more limited. But I don't believe that's what counts most in this journey to sharing. It's about the heart and motivation, the desire to do what's right for the faith community of which we are a part. I have never embraced the "prosperity gospel" which suggests some kind of barter system with God. Truthfully, giving and serving is its own reward. It's a great feeling to be able to step up and assist with a project, or to provide financial assistance for a special undertaking, or to know that what we are contributing helps to "keep the lights on".

When I was about six years of age, I remember my parents returning from a worship service with the news that they were going to be missionaries. Of course at that age I had no understanding of the implications of such a decision. It would take my parents down a path of ministry and full-time service that impacted my life in many ways. It involved multiple moves back and forth to the location of the seminary, followed by a period of local ministry and finally a long boat ride to the country of Brazil where I lived until the age of 17. My parents modelled a life of service and sacrificial giving, in addition to opening the doors for their children to participate in ministry such as handing out Christian tracts in large group gatherings. Linda also grew up in an environment of seeing her mother very involved and serving in a variety of ministry endeavors.

I remember that we tithed on the cost of the first piece of furniture that we purchased as an engaged couple. We took delight in that as opposed to it being an obligation or an expected ritual. I believe the message of the cross is that of grace as opposed to legalistic expectations. It's important for all of us to be open to God's leading and "still small voice". Consider it a privilege when some need or task presents itself in the service of our faith community. May God bless each of you in this endeavor.

Sincerely,
Roger K. Fretz

