

Sharon begins:

When we were asked to share a Stewardship Moment, I told Curt that I thought I had a story I could share so I'd take care of writing it if he would agree not to read it. I know him well enough to know that he is probably pretty nervous about that right about now. If I'm being totally honest, he's pretty nervous anytime he sees me in front of a microphone!

Well 32 years ago, I was a divorced mom with two young daughters to raise on my own. I was working two jobs to make ends meet and just praying to God for help to make it through each day. Y'all ever pray and try to make "deals or bargains" with God? You know, like promise God that if he'd just change your situation, that you'd do lots of good things and help everyone that you could? Well, I did that a lot!

Now, one of the jobs I had was for a large law firm — and over the years, I was assigned to work for scores of attorneys, some kind and considerate, and others so insensitive that I just knew that if I slumped over dead at my desk, they'd immediately be on the phone to HR, telling them that I'd stopped typing and could they please send someone to wind me back up. So you can imagine my anxiety level when I was informed that I'd be taking on yet another additional new attorney assignment. Because you just never know what you're going to get, right? So, it would be some guy named Curt Webb. Well, it didn't take me long to figure out that he was one of the good ones and that everything would be okay at work. So one day, when I was just about to leave my desk for lunch, the phone rang. I answered it like I always did, "Mr. Webb's office," only this time it was Mr. Webb. He was out of town at a trial, and he asked me if I could possibly do him a huge favor and go buy some tickets for a concert that he really wanted to go to. I said that I guessed that I could, and then I asked him how he wanted to handle actually getting the tickets from me. He said "Well, I thought you would just bring them with you!" I said, "Bring them with me where?" He said, "To the concert." I said, "Are you asking me out?" He said, "Well, I'm trying to." I said, "Well, you're not very good at it."

Well, needless to say, the date worked out and here we are today. So my whole point in sharing this story is that apparently God was listening to all of my desperate prayers where I pleaded and bargained with Him to change my circumstances. He kept His end of "the bargain" by sending me a man who would not only change my life and the lives of my daughters in amazing ways, but he also sent me a man who, instead of wanting to buy fancy homes and sports cars, preferred to see our resources "walking around." By that, I mean he wanted us to use our money to help others. That is his joy, that is our joy. I guess you could say that holding up my end of my "deal" with God became Curt's mission too.

We talked about it and decided that the best way to help would be to give through a church. So we joined one and for 25 years, we made and fulfilled our pledges and became very involved with lots of mission partners. All was great until, as most of you already know, a discernment

process at that church forced us to leave. It was not only personally devastating to us, but it also meant that if we wanted to continue giving and staying involved, we would have to find another avenue to make that happen. Fortunately, it didn't take long before we heard about an amazing church named St. Philip with an outstanding reputation!

We visited, loved it, joined, and got involved immediately by joining the Mission Committee. Our time on that committee allowed us to see firsthand all of the scores of lives changed as a result of your gifts! We are always so proud to say that St. Philip is our church!

If you're like us and want to see your resources "walking around," there is no better place than St. Philip to give of your time, talent, and treasure. Each of you should take joy and pride in knowing that your church takes very seriously the business of stewardship in all its forms — whether it is protecting the planet entrusted to our care, welcoming the stranger and refugee, or using its resources to care for the least of these. For us, making and fulfilling our pledge to St. Philip is our way of continuing to keep our promise to God and trying to be good stewards.

Finally, listen to the words of 2 Corinthians 9:7:

Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

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Curt continues:

You know, you'd think that after 32 years, that she'd get tired of telling that story. I mean the part about how skillfully I asked her out for our first date. I guess that was meant to remind me that I need to be direct when asking for things. So, let me be clear here...

We all know that God loves a cheerful giver, but Sharon and I, and your Stewardship Committee, aren't quite so discriminating! Yes, cheerful givers are great, but we welcome any and all givers! Even the reluctant givers are welcome!

Anyway, if you happen to be one of those reluctant givers, we know that once you've seen the amazing ways in which your gifts change so many lives, you will join the ranks of the cheerful in no time at all! I hope that each of you will join us in supporting St. Philip, so that it can remain a place known for its extreme generosity out into this needy world by making your pledge today.