

Today, I will talk about my thought on stewardship. When I first wrote this testimony, I was worried that it would sound very evangelical and money-focused. But please understand that I speak in the language of a businessman.

Why is church expecting us to pay money? If I am a steward of somebody, should that somebody even give me a salary instead of asking me to fund his or her business? Some people may argue that there's nothing wrong with this logic, especially in a capitalist country. Then, what justifies the church's expectation on stewardship from its members? In my opinion, unlike donations, stewardship in Christianity is meant only for people who have confessed that their lives and everything they have were given by God. There's nothing wrong with donating money through the church by the way. That's actually a very good thing too. However, stewardship should be distinguished from donations. I am not donating my tithes and offerings. Rather, I am returning God's investment and his earnings as a form of tithes and offerings. It's like a company paying its dividends to shareholders. Who is the shareholder of my life and your life?

When I was a teenager, I was a very hard-working church member. Believe or not! Church was my highest priority, even higher than school. I tried to believe everything in the bible as facts, not as analogies. I almost never missed church services including 3 services on Sunday, services on Wednesday, spent most of my time after school, and took every leadership role in the youth group. It was a lot of pressure, but I never thought I can live without church. When I was 12 years old, my church invited a guest pastor who is very good at fundraising when the church wanted to demolish the current church building and build a bigger and nicer one. (By the way, I personally don't believe this is the wisest way to spend church money.) Anyway, his sermon was about Solomon building the first church of Israel, a privilege that even his father David didn't have. He argued that building a church is a huge blessing and that being a part of the project is a lifetime opportunity. I was convinced by his sermon back then and wrote \$300 on a paper he distributed for determination collection, although I had never had \$100 in my life and my mom was barely making enough money to feed her two kids after my father passed away. I surely saved all the money that I got in order to pay what I promised, and eventually, I was able to pay \$300 in less than a year. Yes. It was just a faith for blessing. But it was how I experienced a covenant between me and God. I started to do my tithe since then.

While I was a very evangelical Christian until high school, I became more like a laid-back Christian after I left home for college. I didn't even go to church for a while. I was too busy with recovering my hangover from Saturday Night Fever. I started to look myself as an independent Christian reading the bible and praying by myself everyday instead of going to church on Sunday. This change isolated myself from communicating with other people, but helped me reflect what is God to me. It gives me some space to contemplate God's words and taught me the joy of Quiet Time with God. I started to question why. Instead of questioning "is this real?", I started to focus on asking why God does this and that, and what is God's real intention. For example, I don't care whether God created the world or not anymore but why God created the world or why the bible recorded that God created the world. What is the message behind this? This process of asking why question and finding my own answer helped me realize that God in the bible is very personalized for me because the message for me would be very different from the

message for others. The bible often mentions God as God of somebody. God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Joseph, God of Moses and God of Joshua. There are many biblical figures who recognize their personalized God. I believe one of the real reasons that God introduced all of the biblical figures is to show examples how to find one's own God and to lead us to find our personalized God. In my own translation of the bible, the real purpose that God characterize himself as one and only is along the same line because God of Eric is one and only. Maybe worshiping idols might mean worshiping God of others, not God of yourself. Without personalization of God, it would have been impossible for me to accept the bible itself and to admit that God is the owner of life.

Stewardship is not fulfilled by our generosity but by our sincerity and honesty to God. Whether we make 5 talents with 5 talents or 2 talents with 2 talents, before thinking how much we make we should first think that earnings and principal are all God's. Thankfully, God gave us a right to decide how to set our dividends for the year. We are the CEO of our lives, and God is our shareholder. So, basically, I am using God's money for paying my tithe. So, Friends in Leonia Presbyterian church! I hope you set the dividends for the year wisely!