

Sermon Title: **“Stewardship Campaign for 2022 #1: My Stewardship Story”**

Bible: **Matthew 6:24 & Philippians 4:10-13 (NRSV)**

When: on Sunday, October 10th, 2021

Where: about 30 people (plus YouTube live streaming viewers) at Gilroy UMC

## **Opening Prayer**

Gracious God, I stand humbly in front of this church and you. Please be with me in your mercy and grace. Let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock, and our Redeemer. Amen.

## **1. Intro**

In October and November, our congregation will have a stewardship campaign for the year 2022. I plan to give two messages about stewardship. Today’s message is about my stewardship story. Another message in November will be about our church finances.

Before I start my message, I would like to say that I am so proud of our congregation.

Literally, this pastor has an awesome church. Our congregation restarted having a stewardship campaign in 2017. The numbers of the pledges have been increased year by year: for 2017, 2; for 2018, 5; for 2019, 12; for 2020, 20. Even during COVID-19, for this year 2021, the church received 25 pledges. I am so proud of our congregation, not only for these increasing numbers, but also for the spiritual muscle memory. I believe that the stewardship campaign is for our spiritual discipline, our spiritual muscle. I am thankful for our upcoming stewardship campaign for this next year of 2022, which will be the sixth year of our stewardship campaigns in a row. I

hope that our congregation will have this muscle memory or a good habit of stewardship campaigns until I am back to celebrate our 200th year anniversary in 2053.

## **2. Offering is My Spiritual Discipline.**

There are many ways of spiritual disciplines. According to our membership vows of the United Methodist Church, we can participate in our church ministries with our prayers, our presence, our gifts, our service, and our witness. Offering is just one of many spiritual disciplines. Before becoming a member of the United Methodist Church, as a Christian, I chose offering as one of my spiritual disciplines. That's because I totally believe in Matthew 6:24. Money is very important. We cannot live without money. I will make as much money as I can. Before I became a full-time pastor, I was thinking of taking on another job, like the Apostle Paul who as a tentmaker had two jobs. I do not think that being a pastor is the only holy job. If we can feed ourselves and our family in a right and healthy way, I believe that all jobs are holy jobs, callings that God has given us, like being a pastor is for me. Even though I cannot live without money, I do not want to be a slave to money. I would like to be free from money. I do not want to give up our God because of money. To choose God more and more beyond money, offering is my spiritual discipline.

## **3. Tithe: Giving 10% first from Income**

Thanks to my Korean-Christian DNA, my goal is tithing. A tithe means 10%. Giving 10% first from my income to God is my genetic goal. I love this 10%. This means that 90% is kind of mine. God is the creator of heaven and earth. God has trees and birds, this Earth, the Moon, the

Sun, and the stars. God does not need 100% of my income. If I give 10%, I believe that God regards my 10% as 100%. To God, my 10% means all my heart, all my soul, and all my mind. God is so great and so generous. I learned that giving is not for God, but for me. It is for my spiritual growth. So, I still try to tithe.

#### **4. My Pledge Story**

In most Korean churches, there is no pledge form, because of the concept of the tithe. Since I learned about stewardship campaigns and pledge forms, I use pledge forms for my goal of giving a tithe. Generally speaking, I write down 10% of my income on the pledge form. I also remember that my commitment may be increased or decreased as circumstances change. During COVID-19, I have reduced the percentage of offering. When I am sick, I do not exercise. When I have back pain, I take a rest. When I needed to take care of my family, I spent my time, energy, and money on my family. I reduced the percentage of offering, but I did not stop giving, because I did not want to lose my spiritual muscle of generosity.

Now it is time to fill out our pledge forms for the year 2022. Thankfully, I have become a full-time pastor. Which one is more difficult, to give \$100 or to give \$200? To me, both are not that easy. But let us think in a different way. I would like to build my muscles. I need to find the proper weight dumbbells. If I lift the light one, it cannot build my muscles. If I lift the heavy one, it will hurt me. If I have \$1,000, giving \$100 might be okay. If I have \$10,000, giving \$100 cannot be an exercise. If I have \$2,000, giving \$200 might need to build muscle. Probably, that's why the tithe is a percentage. To build up my tithing muscles, I plan to write down my

proper amount on the pledge form. Slowly and steadily, I will build up my spiritual muscles of tithing.

## **5. My Bucket List After I Became a Full-time Pastor**

After I became a full-time pastor, I started to do one of my bucket lists. When I took a workshop for new pastors, I got this bucket list. There were many teachers. One teacher shared how he has not received any honorariums from wedding and memorial services for the church members, except for travel expenses, because occasionally he needed to take a flight. That's because providing wedding and memorial services is one of the responsibilities, duties, or privileges as a pastor. I agree with what he has done. I would like to follow his way. However, at that time, I was a part-time pastor. It was my excuse. In my mind, if I became a full-time pastor, then I would not make excuses. I also had a chance to talk about this with one of my mentors. He shared that when he receives an honorarium from wedding or memorial services, he saves it for the clergy discretionary fund. That's because in reality, most families prepare an honorarium for the pastor for their wedding and memorial services. To refuse the honorarium is neither appropriate nor practical. I like my mentor's way. Now that I have become a full-time pastor, I cannot use a part-time position as my excuse. When I encountered the moment to do my bucket list, I found that I was spoiled. As money is so powerful, I was already spoiled. That's why I share my humble story here. I want to learn how to live as a full-time pastor, as I learned how to live as a part-time pastor. In Philippians, the Apostle Paul confesses that he has learned to be content with whatever he has, when he has little, and when he has plenty. Now I

am not a part-time pastor anymore. It is a time to learn how to live when I have plenty. I agree with my mentor and my teacher at the workshop for new pastors. I have learned that church members, friends, and families come to me for memorial services, not because I am a good person, but because I am a pastor of this church. Even if they do not know me well, they come to me. I am already paid by their love as well as by the church. I should remember who I am and what I am, my responsibility and my duty. It is my privilege to be there with our church members when they need a pastor. As a first-year full-time pastor, I set up my goal as a certain percentage. It is not 100% yet. Year by year, I will get closer to accomplishing my bucket list.

## **6. Stewardship Campaign for 2022**

For the stewardship campaign for 2022, the pledge forms will be mailed to all of the church members with my pastoral letter this week or next week. The pledge form is one of the opportunities for our spiritual growth. It can be a privilege as Christians, because giving is our spiritual practice. Every penny, and every dollar matters. Every pledge form matters. Our spiritual muscles will remember our pledges and our stewardship campaign. I am already excited for the year 2022. With our spiritual muscle of generosity, we will serve our Lord, God's Kingdom, and our community more and better!

## **Closing Prayer**

Gracious God, thank you so much for your generosity. Thank you so much for the opportunity of giving as our spiritual practice. We want to serve you and your Kingdom more and better!

Please be our personal trainer and lead us to build our spiritual muscle of generosity. In Jesus' name. Amen.