

Prince of Peace Church
Giving Testimony from Gail

"I never had the opportunity to tell him about my experience, and I've always regretted that." -Gail

"Not that I was ever in need, for I have learned how to get along happily, whether I have much or little. I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. For I can do everything with the help of Christ who gives me the strength I need."
Philippians 4:11-13 New Living Translation Bible

I haven't always understood and relied on these wonderful words from the Apostle Paul. However, after some major unexpected and heartbreaking changes in my life many years ago, the Holy Spirit helped me to grow closer to God and to be patient and trust in Him.

I think it's imperative to truly believe that everything belongs to God. Once that is established in your mind, and understood, it's easy (maybe I should say easier) to accept one's circumstances and trust God to provide for all that He knows we need. This is one step that I learned during my difficult period and I'd like to share my experience about how I came to look forward to giving to the Lord.

I grew up in a family that went to church regularly and I continued attending church fairly regularly after I was married. I never heard anything about tithing and although I'm ashamed to admit it, my husband and I gave very little to the churches we attended over the years. When my circumstances drastically changed I went through a very dark period in my life, but by God's grace and direction I was able to accept the changes in my life and grow closer to Him.

It was during that time that I started attending a church that was loving, supportive, and taught biblical principles. I had also started listening

to WCIF radio and became aware of a Christian financial counselor and I listened to him every day. I even bought one of his books and studied it diligently. I learned a lot about budgeting, tithing, and being a good steward of my resources. I learned that God loves a cheerful giver and that you can't out give God. I soaked all this in, or so I thought.

The next part of my story is quite embarrassing, because apparently I didn't fully comprehend the principle of tithing. When it came time for me to make a budget I started listing all the things I was accustomed to having. However, no matter how often I tweaked my expenses I never had ten percent left for my tithe. I asked God to help me. Eventually a lightbulb went off and I realized that I'd been working backward. I realized that the tithe came first and I had to make some changes to my budget. I needed to differentiate from my needs and wants. I don't know why, but thankfully that really wasn't hard to do and I got very excited. I couldn't wait to write my first real tithe check and I continue to feel secure and blessed to be able to do that.

As time went on I learned that tithing is really an Old Testament requirement, and for us tithing is a starting point. I have been truly amazed at how much I can give and yet still have a very comfortable life. When I was growing up, my family never had much. I can look back and understand that even though I rarely had everything I wanted, I did have everything I needed and I'm grateful for that. I'm also one of those people who easily fears not being provided for, and not having enough. However, I know God's word is true and I can trust Him for his provisions. I also lean on Paul's words for peace when circumstances change as they invariably do, and my tendency to worry starts to raise its ugly head.

Many years ago I met someone at a class the church was providing on giving, and when the subject of tithing came up he confided to me that he wished he could tithe but there were so many expenses to consider. He mentioned cable TV, vacations, frequent meals out, and other things they were used to that he didn't see how it was possible to tithe. I never had the opportunity to tell him about my experience, and I've always regretted that.

I imagine many people feel that way and I understand because our world is filled with so many things that compete for our attention and are aimed at our emotions. The Apostle Paul also tells us in Colossians 3 that “If you have been raised with Christ , seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.” When we realize that nothing we have belongs to us then it is so much easier to give. It’s really true that it is more blessed to give than to receive. God wants only the best for you so be at peace and return a portion of what He has given to you. Be a joyful giver. You’ll never regret it!

-Gail