

It's that time of the year when we all sit back and reassess our New Year's Resolutions. Are you still remaining faithful to your resolution? Are you in the process of implementing them? Or worse yet, have you thrown in the towel all together? I have been there, done that, bought the t-shirt. Not judging.

Rather than the gym, or home repairs, or a diet, have you considered some personal reflection? Have you thought about what you can do for someone else? If you have been gifted with good health, a loving family and a circle of friends to include your church family you already have many treasures. Moving here from Michigan, I've found myself in the position of making new friends. In my circles of friends before I moved here, I was fortunate enough to have known most of them my whole life. I grew up knowing their stories. Now here, I've heard new stories from new friends. Some have lived a life of great bounty, some of tragedy, some with many struggles. They persevered and still have their faith to show for it.

Given that, considering all of our blessings might we consider as a "resolution" giving to our church in the

way of our time and talents?

My favorite bible verse, we all have one, is Luke 12:48 “To whom much is given, much will be required.”

This verse like many others, I’m sure has been paraphrased and tweaked to suit a purpose. Take Uncle Ben in Spider-man “With great power comes great responsibility.” Not sure Jesus foresaw this being a Spiderman thing. I believe his intent was to remind us that we are held responsible for the blessings he’s bestowed us with. Pretty sure his intent was that we glorify God with what we’ve been given.

Romans 12:6-8

We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man’s gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others; let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

Let me take a minute here to share a story with you. At one time, my family went to an inner city church in downtown Flint. I was a single mom at the time, middle school aged kids went to church with me. It was common for homeless people to wander into the church. There was a homeless man that often sat in front of us, you know how we Methodists are we have our own seats. This one homeless man sat in front of us. He always had a plastic bag with empty cans in it, we recycle in Michigan, you get 10 cents a can to turn them into the grocery store. When he sat down, you could hear the cans clang on the floor under the pew. When the collection plate was passed he would dig down into his dirty pants and pull out one of those old rubber clam change purses, hold both sides of it, spread it wide open, and empty the change into the plate. To this day, I can't remember a more humbling thing to witness. Deep inside, I was secretly shaming myself for all the times I had wanted more for myself and my kids but was unable to provide it. Yet we had clean clothes, food on the table, a roof over our heads and a car to get to work in. Oh, plus we had a dog. She was little.

Getting back to the subject, don't entertain the

thought that the less we know about God and his gifts, the less we're responsible for or the less we have to do to glorify Him. As Christians, it's our responsibility to know what God wants from us. Micah 6:8 says "He has showed you, o man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

If you aren't sure what God wants you to do with your talents, pray, ask God how best to use your talents in the service of the church or community. I promise it will come to you. The apostle Paul says that we all have gifts according to the grace given to each of us.

Matthew 16:24-27 says "Then Jesus said to his disciples, If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life, will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. What good will it be for man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done."

Look at it this way, in your service to God you are “building your treasures in heaven.”

Luke, the physician, who wrote the book of Luke, was the only Gentile to write any part of the New Testament. Paul’s letter to the Colossians makes a distinction between Luke and some of the other colleagues as “of the circumcision” in other words the Jews. Luke is the only New Testament writer identified as a non-Jew. Luke was a good friend of Paul’s, accompanying him on his journey to Jerusalem and Rome and was also imprisoned with him there according to Paul in Acts 27. Luke took very seriously his gifts for language, writing and navigation. Luke 4:18 “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

Clearly, Luke got the message! He knew what the Lord wanted him to do with his gifts.

The gospel of Luke is a beautiful picture of our

compassionate Savior. Jesus didn't turn his back on the poor and the needy. They were the hallmark of his ministry. At that time, Israel was very class conscious. The homeless and downtrodden had no chance to better themselves. There were no Derbyshire Places or no Goodwill to employ them. That became their lot in life. They desperately needed to hear the word of God to develop their spiritual lives.

Part of us developing our spiritual lives now is sharing our "gips and graces" as the Bishop in our district in Michigan would say. In his Indian accent he would encourage us to use our "gips and graces" every day.

At the end of the day, who you are, what you do, and how you show up in the world is special and unique. Everything that you share-whether it's your smile, your compassionate heart, your sharp intellect, or just your quality of presence has a ripple effect on everyone around you and beyond. Turns out you DO matter. You matter in more ways and on more days than you could ever possibly imagine. Whoever you are and whatever you do, the world and your church needs you. When you think big, show up bold and

share your uniqueness, your gifts are realized and you become a role model for all of us.

In conclusion let me share one more little snippet with you. I realize that I'm new to the church so I've tried to share little stories of things that have molded me over the years. My goal is to encourage you to share what you know. I was a caregiver for my husband for 10 years and my Mom for about two years before their death. It was such a privilege to be able to spend that precious time with them. Looking around, I'm sure there are many doing the same things. I'm not going to lie, caregiving is not for the faint of heart. I have no medical background at all. Sometimes both were sick at the same time. I was adopted by my Mom and Dad. They gave me such a wonderful life I wanted to do what I could to be there for Mom. My husband . . . well, he put up with me, nuff said there. After their deaths, my daughter, the psych nurse, said "Mom, you should become a caregiver for people." I got all huffy and said No Way! Been there done that, bought the t-shirt! Then months down the road, I felt a calling to rethink what she said. I'm not going to go so far as to say God tapped me on the shoulder; but who knows

maybe he did. My conclusion was that I'm considering what I enjoy doing, which is giving people benefit of what I learned when I stumbled through their care. Maybe I can share what I learned and how I researched things the doctors said. Just a thought. It's that time of the year when we all sit back and reassess our New Years Resolutions. Are you still remaining faithful? Are you in the process of implementing them? Or worse yet, have you thrown in the towel all together? I have been there, done that, bought the t-shirt. Not judging. Rather than the gym, or home repairs, or a diet, have you considered some personal reflection? Have you thought about what you can do for someone else? If you have been gifted with good health, a loving family and a circle of friends to include your church family you already have many treasures. Moving here from Michigan, I've found myself in the position of making new friends. In my circles of friends before I moved here, I was fortunate enough to have known most of them my whole life. I grew up knowing their stories. Now here, I've heard new stories from new friends. Some have lived a life of great bounty, some of tragedy, some with many struggles. They persevered and still have their faith



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