

## StewardLife LESSON 12



### STORY:

Once upon a time there was a neighborhood. It was much like yours. But down on one corner, for as long as people could remember, there was a gigantic wrapped present.

For years, through wind and rain, snow and sleet, the present stood there, wrapped up tight. The bow was becoming tattered, the outside wrapping faded, but there it stood.

People in the neighborhood were curious about this huge box. They would walk by and hear sounds of singing coming from inside. Sometimes they heard talking—occasionally late into the evening. School busses would stop and children would come and go. Cars would surround the box on weekends. And although the neighborhood residents saw people going in and out of the big box, they never could seem to locate a door, no matter how hard they looked.

One day a stranger came to the neighborhood. He was new, and more curious than the long-time residents. He was determined to unwrap that present. He tried to cut the ribbon. It wouldn't cut. He tried to pull off the wrapping. No luck.

"I'm sure that someone meant this gift for the neighborhood," he suggested to one of the residents. "Why is this gift so hard to unwrap?"

"Oh, it's meant for us, alright," the neighbor replied, "but we can't unwrap it from the outside. This gift has to be opened from the inside out."

## STORY:

The telephone rang and Carl answered it. He did not recognize the name of the person on the other end, but he heard the voice say, "Carl J. Newsome?"

"Yes, this is Carl J. Newsome."

"Well, I have a \$50,000 check for you," the voice announced.

Now Carl was a wise consumer and the first thing he thought was that this was one of those telemarketing prize scams for a land development company.

"Carl, did you hear me? This is Randolph Carter, attorney. Are you there?"

Carl sat down. This didn't sound like a scam.

The attorney continued: "You have been named in the will of the local industrialist Peter Townsend who recently passed away. He has left you \$50,000."

"Why would he leave me such a large sum of money? I don't even know him," Carl replied.

"Well, he knows you," the lawyer continued, "and there's no mistake about it, it's your money. I'll give you a phone number to call to arrange delivery of the check."

After Carl took down all of the information and hung up the phone, he raced to the stack of last week's newspapers. Turning to the obituary pages he saw a photo of Peter Townsend. It was "Old Pete!" That's the only way Carl had ever known him. He had stopped regularly in the barber shop where Carl had worked for more than 20 years, always asking for Carl to cut his hair. During all those years, Carl and Old Pete had probably talked about everything under the sun and solved all the problems of the world—more than once!

One thing they never talked about was Old Pete's business. The barber shop was an escape for Old Pete, and Carl had respected his wishes.

When the check was delivered, the attorney told Carl that he had been the most loyal person Peter Townsend had ever met—a person Old Pete could count on more than his business partners, all his acquaintances and even his family.

## INSIGHT OUT:

"I'm so full I can't eat another bite!" Have you heard or even said that before? It doesn't make sense to keep eating when you are full. It can be uncomfortable, but more importantly, it can be unhealthy.

Do you wonder why God doesn't bless you more? In Mary's song (Luke 1:53) she gives an answer: He fills the hungry with good things, but has sent the rich away empty.

God can't keep feeding full mouths, keep filling full tables or keep filling cups that are full.

Be generous in sharing what you have, both physically and spiritually, with those in need in your congregation, community and world. Then there will be room in your life for more blessings God has in store for you. You can't outgive God!

## EXERCISE:

Part of the StewardLife is to relate to the common things that bind individuals together. At the basic level it is our humanity that binds us together. At the social level we call it "community." In the church we give it a spiritual dimension and call it "fellowship."

Examine your relationships. Can you define lines of division that mark the three levels of commonality? Where do most of your relationships fall? How are you managing what God has given you at the "humanity" level? Where does your life management impact your community? Do you find yourself part of a fellowship of faith that is really a collection of individuals? If so, how are you contributing to change that? How do you open up yourself and your gifts to your community?

Finally, define for yourself the type of community that happens when you sit down at your computer and log on. How can you, as one of God's stewards, serve this community?

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