**Randy Bowlby: Oct 16, 2016**

Good Morning Redeemer! I’m Randy Bowlby, your Stewardship Chair

As Kate said, this is the kick-off of our fall Stewardship Campaign when we ask all of you to think about your financial resources and how much you will give to Redeemer in the coming year. Not an easy topic to talk about or to listen to – rather one that makes you fidget in your seats and eye the exits. Don’t even think about it as I have committee members guarding all the doors.

Below me is this year’s campaign banner with the theme, Living Generously. What does this mean to us? What should it mean to us?

I’m going to tell you a story to illustrate what I think it may mean. No it’s not the donut story but I’ll be glad to tell that later if anyone hasn’t heard it. Like the donut story, this takes place in San Antonio when I served in the Air Force with Cassie and our two girls, Andrea and Tiffany.

I was a B-52 navigator doing functional check flights on aircraft following their periodic inspections and overhauls. Dan Smith was also a B-52 nav in our small unit at Kelly AFB. We had a fair amount of time on our hands as we waited for aircraft to come off the production line and we would talk about many subjects, including our previous assignments, families and backgrounds. Dan was a Capt., married with 5 kids and he was from Utah. As you may have guessed, Dan was a Mormon. During our conversations, I learned that he tithed, that is, he gave 10% of his income to the church, no questions asked. Now, captains in the Air Force don’t make a lot of money and I asked him how he was able to manage that feat with 5 kids and a mortgage. He admitted it wasn’t easy and he and his wife often had to make tough choices about things they wanted to buy or things they might want to do. But they seemed not to lack for anything essential and seemed happy and fulfilled in their life.

Now I had no intention of becoming a Mormon, but the tithing thing made me think hard about how little Cassie and I were giving to our church and whether or not we could ever get to a tithe. BTW, this was about the same time we heard the donut story so maybe we were in San Antonio for a reason. Anyway, Cassie and I committed to increasing our pledge year by year to give a meaningful proportion of our income to the church. And, in doing so, we found a certain joy from really including God in our budget plan. I tell you this to encourage each of you, as you think about your pledge, to seriously consider a proportional gift to the church with the eventual goal of a tithe – 10%.

You ask, “Is Bowlby nuts?” “Is he TOTALLY off the rails now?” but there is scripture, my friends, in Genesis 28 for example:

‘A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord; it is holy to the Lord.

I’ll leave you with one final thought. In our Stewardship meetings, we often ask ourselves, “gee, we have a $35K budget deficit just to keep programs at current levels; what if everyone gave at least 3% of their income or maybe even 5%? “ (We don’t even dare think about 10%!) Could we turn the deficit into a surplus, maybe have the problem of who shall we hire rather than the other problem, that rhymes with hire?

Are you up for the challenge?

Thanks be to God!