

Why do I give to the ACP?

By Julia Kung

Each year, I make a pledge to give to the ACP. As I reflect upon why I do so, I realize that it was initially out of obligation. When I was a child, my parents taught me that giving 10% to the Lord was a duty, and was not supposed to be very hard. For example, if I had 10 dollars, God required me to give him 1 while I got to keep the other 9 for myself. That seemed fair enough. As I became an adult, I realized that this was not as easy as it seemed. Instead of giving God the first 10% of my paycheck, I seemed to be giving him what was left over at the end of the month. This continued for many years, and my spiritual life dried up, almost as a reflection of my lack of faith, until 2008. This was the year that – despite being a newcomer to the ACP - I was asked to run the stewardship campaign. I wondered how I would get up the nerve to talk about stewardship and ask people to give, when I myself was not a faithful giver. But, that year changed my life, and I have not turned back since then. I made my first pledge in 2008, and have continued to do so every year after that. I realized that when I give, I receive. It was, and still is, a strange concept to me. It seems kind of counterintuitive. Instead of giving out of duty, I now give out of abundance. God has given me so much compared to the other 80% of the people in the world: to live in a developed country, to have education, to have the ability to work... to be able to get up every morning and to walk. With the handicapped access project recently on my mind, I realize that this is not something to be taken for granted.

But what has really amazed me is how the Lord has blessed me back when I give faithfully. In Matthew 6:21 it says “... where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” This is so true. When I give money, I want to know where it’s going. That’s why I’ve become involved in the Finance Committee, to know where my donations go. When I give money, I also want to get involved. I want to know about Friday Mission Lunch, I want to know about Foyer de Grenelle, I want to know about Children’s Worship... And when I get involved in ACP’s ministries, God changes my heart. When I decided to volunteer to teach children at VBS, I was doing it out of abundance, not thinking in any way that I’d be receiving, but rather giving. Strangely enough, the smiles of the children, the questions they asked, and the stories they told me about their lives made me feel so appreciated and fulfilled. Through this experience, God changed my heart from someone who was a type A personality, always prioritizing “getting things done”, and well-behaved children to someone who can love and identify with all children. That was the best blessing for me. It’s not easy to change one’s heart, no matter how hard I tried, and how much I prayed for more love in my life. Not too amazingly, this also improved my relationship at home with my husband and son. I was just so amazed that by giving, I had received the best blessing of all: the one of love, of giving and seeing love in others. I am so amazed at how my life has changed, and will end my story with one of my favorite verses from 2 Corinthians: “The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” (2 Corinthians 9: 6-7)