



# Listing Our God-given Gifts Inspires an “Attitude of Gratitude”

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Stewardship requires an “attitude of gratitude.” Many times we are inclined to take too much credit for our successes in life and too little blame for our failures. The best antidote I have discovered for the hubris of our sense of self-importance is to set aside time to compile a list of the gifts we have received from God.

**The Gift of Life:** Life is a gift from God. None of us did anything to deserve being born. Spend a few moments being thankful for still being alive. My younger brother, Mike, died at the age of 56. He was a delightful human being, a loving husband, father, teacher, coach and friend. He died too young. His family and my brothers and I could focus on what was taken from us or focus on the gift of having him in our lives for whatever part of his 56 years we shared. Life is a gift and we need to live each day thanking God for it.



**The Gift of Family:** Just as we did nothing to deserve being born, we did nothing to deserve the parents and siblings we were given. Sometimes it takes time to fully appreciate the gift of family. There were times when I would have traded in my parents for another set that would have met my perceived needs of the moment. Fortunately, I have lived long enough to realize that they were the best parents for me. My older brother has expressed it this way, “Our father demanded perfection



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and our mother convinced us that we could live up to his expectation.” Once we embrace family as gift, it is amazing how the things that could drive us apart lose their power.

**The Gift of Education:** I have never met anyone who did not have a story about a teacher who changed her or his life. I have my list of such teachers; I’m sure you have yours. Education has changed our worldview and our self-understanding. We have learned from coaches, scout leaders, neighbors, relatives and friends. All learning is a gift from God. We need to be more thankful for the gift of our education.

**The Gift of Vocation:** Nothing in life is as important as discovering what God wants us to do with our lives. I truly believe that God wanted me to be a priest. Many people seem to get lost in their search to discover who and what God wants them to be but the happiest and most fulfilled people I know are

those who are doing what they love and love what they are doing.

**The Gift of Friends:** Let us say together, “We do not deserve the friends we have!” The gift of friendship is so precious. Our friends love us not in spite of our faults but because of them. Friends encourage us to grow and take risks. Friends teach us that time is a gift when they chose to share time with us. Most important of all, our friends see our gifts and talents before we do and they lovingly encourage us to recognize and develop our hidden gifts.



The above list of gifts is not meant to be exhaustive; it is offered as an outline. I hope you will use it to create your own list of gifts. Unless we make ourselves aware of the many gifts God has sown in our lives we will never develop the “attitude of gratitude” that is essential for the spirituality of stewardship to take root in our lives.