

“I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.” Matthew 25:40



Christmas morning, an anniversary, a birthday.... A present wrapped in shiny paper tied with a sparkling bow. Who can resist! Our most treasured gift, however, is the gift of God's son, unconditional, no-strings attached. Such a gift inspires us to be careful stewards, to return to God a portion of what He has given to each of us. Stewardship is accepting the responsibility to be faithful caretakers of our resources and talents, our families, our meetings, our communities, our country and our world.

Conscientious stewardship requires us to go beyond the immediate to lifelong commitment. For the past several years one of our family's Christmas gifts is a gift of a goat, a sheep or a llama, through Heifer International, to another family somewhere in the world – a family who receives the animal and the training necessary to care for that animal – enabling the family to become self-reliant and self-sustaining. The importance of just one animal is reflected in the words of a Thai farmer in a 2008 publication of Heifer International: “If I die, my family will weep for me; if my water buffalo dies, my family will starve.” Similarly, an article in the Greensboro News and Record this past summer and the children's book Beatrice's Goat illustrate the blessing of such an offering. Beatrice Biira, nine years old, longed to go to school with other children in her village in Uganda, but her family had no means to purchase the necessary uniforms and materials. In 1992, Beatrice and her family received a goat from Heifer International. Beatrice soon was able to sell any extra goat's milk to nearby villagers. Eventually, with the income from this milk, her mother bought Beatrice a uniform and books and enrolled her in a local school. This past spring Beatrice graduated from Connecticut College with a degree in international development and gender studies. At present she is pursuing a graduate degree in public service at the University of Arkansas. Beatrice has become a part of the cycle of sharing that began decades ago with the gift of a goat – unconditional, no-strings attached – family to family, community to community, across the world.

Stewardship is simply our way to say thank you to God for his priceless gift of Jesus Christ, cheerfully and responsibly giving back a portion of what we have received, knowing that as we share our time, talent, resources, and service, the light of Christ within us touches the lives of others far beyond the present.

- Susie Thomas, Centre Friends Meeting

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