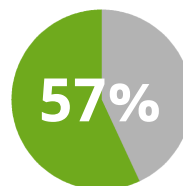


JOURNALS POSTED ON DECEMBER 21, 2018

Gift Exchange



STAN SLADE



SUPPORT PLEDGED



GLOBAL

"I remember when you came to our town, many years ago. I was 17. Your message touched my life and the changes have continued to this day."

What a gift!

No, not my "gift" to him. His gift to me. Or, more accurately, God's gifts to each of us, by means of the other!

I confess I don't remember exactly what I said that day—but God used it in a powerful way in Félix's life. Thanks be to God. And thanks also to Félix, for letting me know!

It was a wonderful encouragement to learn, years later, that God had been at work in ways that I could not have foreseen! It is a wonderful encouragement to keep trusting that the Lord will use today's and tomorrow's efforts in ways I cannot imagine at the moment. Thank you, Félix!

My experience with Félix last month in El Salvador reminded me of a tiny portion of Paul's letter to the followers of Jesus in Rome. At the beginning of the letter, Paul expresses his deep desire to visit the believers in Rome. He tells them about his eagerness to bless them with some of what the Lord has taught him. And then he seems to catch himself, to interrupt himself. He doesn't want to give the impression that their relationship will be a one-way street, with all the encouragement flowing from Paul to the Romans, "rather so that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine." Or, as the Good News version renders it, "What I mean is that both you and I will be helped at the same time, you by my faith and I, by yours" (Romans 1:12).

Mutuality in mission. Giving **and** receiving.

It is not just that I believe service in the mission of Jesus **should** work that way—though it is, indeed, a very basic mission principle for me. More than an aspiration, value, principle or commitment, it is my lived experience: service in the mission of Jesus really **does** work that way!

When the Gospel of John tells the story of the feeding of the 5,000, John includes a detail that the other Gospels leave out: the five barley loaves and two fish that eventually get miraculously multiplied were actually given to the cause of Jesus by a little boy (John 6:9). I have a hunch about how the story ended, based on the character of Jesus. My hunch, though not even John mentions this, is that when the twelve baskets of leftovers were gathered up at the end of the meal, most of them must have been carried to the little boy's home and given to his family. It is just a hunch. But I have been that little boy.

I hope you have, too! I hope your 2018 has included at least some opportunities to enjoy words of grateful testimony from some of the Félixes in your own life, and to savor some of the leftovers created by Jesus' use of your own contributions.

A special word of thanks to all of you who have prayed for God's work through me and those who have given to make it possible, and those who have expressed encouragement along the way! It is wonderful to be some part of what the Lord is doing through each of you, and to have your partnership in what God is doing through me!

May the Lord bless you richly as we all remember the greatest gift we have received, through a little boy born in Bethlehem!

Stan

P.S. While I am deeply grateful to all those whom God uses to make this mission service possible, I continue to work with my MPT (Mission Partnership Team) to expand our network of support. We are looking

for about 65 additional households and churches able to

pledge to support this ministry on a monthly, quarterly or annual basis. At the same time, **all** gifts are helpful and **very** welcome, whether one-time or recurring! Please pray about making the financial support of this ministry part of the work that God does in mission through you. We would **love** to partner with you for the cause of Christ!

