Better to Give than to Receive
By Rachel Espinoza

A few weeks ago, my husband and I had dinner with our best man Jim and his wife Maura. They’ve been married for over ten years now, and during dinner, Maura asked what we’ve learned so far about marriage. She shared that for them, compassion, commitment, and compromise have been guiding principles. I added another to her list: generosity. For me, generosity is all about the willingness to give, to extend ourselves on behalf of the other, to defer to the other with a cheerful heart. In the short span that we’ve been married, I’ve come to realize that this virtue is one of the most valuable virtues to cultivate in marriage. But what does this virtue look like in day-to-day life? I’d like to demonstrate generosity—in-action in three areas of married life: Food, Faith, and Fun.

Food. My husband and I call ourselves foodies—not because we’re in to trends and hip restaurants—but because we just like to eat! But food can sometimes be a challenge for married couples, especially in the beginning. I like to eat healthily, with lots of vegetables and lighter options. Gibran loves meaty meals—the more meat the better! We joke that the only “argument” we have always starts with: “Honey, what do you want for dinner?” We both tend to defer to the other, seeking to accommodate the other’s preferences. In our marriage, these discussions would often become a battle of who would acquiesce and finally pick something! The issue was, we were both trying to be generous with each other (The Gift of the Magi, by O. Henry, anyone?). Now, we take turns allowing the other to treat us to our favorite meal and are both enriched in the process.

Faith. Faith only grows when it’s given away. One of the best things couples can do to grow together is to share faith, not only with each other, but with those around them. Gibran has always been generous in sharing his faith with me and with others. Though I work in ministry, I’ve been inspired by watching him also share faith with our friends. While I can be a bit shy at times in sharing my faith (for fear of coming off as the “crazy Church lady”), he shares faith naturally and openly, and this encourages me to get out of my comfort zone and do the same.

Fun. One of Gibran’s favorite pastimes is video gaming. Early on in our marriage, it was a source of contention. I’d want to talk, he want to game. There’s the old phrase: “If you can’t beat ’em, join ’em!” and well, I got a subscription to play his favorite massive-multiplayer online game. I figured at the time that this would be something I’d do for him. Little did I know that this would become a shared pastime, and a great source of fun and even love in our marriage. My being generous with allowing Gibran the space to do what he loves and even joining him in it has blessed us both. As I’ve gotten into the game, I’ve experienced an outpouring of his love in new ways—ways I could not have experienced before—he’s using the game to love me better! At every turn, he’s helping my character level up, crafting new gear for my battle classes, or sending me food to boost my
in–game stats. I’ll often check my in–game message box and find little love notes. That’s generosity in action.

When we give freely of ourselves—even when it means putting aside our preferences, our comfort zones, or our pastimes—we find ourselves and our love for one another magnified, not diminished. Generosity only unleashes greater possibilities for love. This is why the Scriptures tell us, “It is [truly] better to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35)!

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