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God and Generosity

By Jackson Ito

When my family first started in Gedatsu, my mother noticed members giving offerings in envelopes. My mother asked Mother Kiyota how much donation would be appropriate. Mother Kiyota replied that there was no set requirement because the financial resources varied from family to family. However, she remarked that whatever you offered to God would be returned many times over.

I was just nine or 10 years old at the time. Even at that young age, I was skeptical. I thought that she was just saying that because the church needed the money. Through the years, I gave whatever I could, but I was not motivated by any expectations for returns. However, in January 2014, one of my stock investments had an unexpectedly high rise of 90% in one day. I was so pleased that, remembering the kindness of Southern California Gedatsu members toward me when I was a poor student at Caltech, I thought it would be an opportunity to repay their kindness by donating a bus charter for LA members for the 2014 Spring Festival.

Chairman Rudy Tsujimura suggested that instead, I should donate the bus for the Fall Festival of 2014, which would coincide with the Gedatsu Church USA 65th Anniversary. I told him that I would donate both. Then, between January to March 2015, that same stock doubled again. It was at that time, finally after 65 years, that I realized that this is what Mother Kiyota had told my mother when we first joined Gedatsu! Thereupon, I made a pledge to *Kami Sama* that I would donate the Spring and Fall Festival buses for the rest of my life. That offer was not conditional on my continuing to profit in the stock market. Rather, it was based upon appreciation and gratitude for the past profits I had already been allowed to benefit from. It did not matter whether I made another penny in the stock market for the rest of my life.

I don't want to stress this point, because I also happen to be treasurer of Gedatsu Church USA, and I don't want members to think that I am only repeating

what Mother Kiyota said to encourage them to donate more to the church. I am only sharing my personal experience.

I don't think it would work if I only gave to the church so I could make more money. I think it only worked out that way because I gave in appreciation and "expected nothing in return."