

a giving

faith

**Now faith is the assurance of things
hoped for, the conviction
of things not seen.**

- Hebrews 11:1

thoughts on faithful giving

- by James Ingold, Wesley Stewardship Chairman

One of my favorite authors, Randy Alcorn, while discussing the abundance of guidance God gives us in His Word regarding finances, writes, "Were we the Bible's editors, we might be tempted to cut out much of what it says about money and possessions. Anyone can see it devotes a disproportionate amount of space to the subject, right? When it comes to money and possessions, the Bible is sometimes redundant, often extreme, and occasionally shocking. It turns many readers away, making it a hard sell in today's marketplace. It interferes with our lives and commits the unpardonable sin --- it makes us feel guilty. If we want to avoid guilt feelings, it forces us to invent fancy interpretations to get around its plain meanings." In my many years of studying and teaching stewardship principles all the while working as a CPA and witnessing how people handle their finances, I couldn't agree more with Mr. Alcorn's statement. When it comes to money, the common mindset is --- "I earned it, it's mine, and no one is going to tell me how to spend it, let alone give it away".

While this may sound like a negative assessment, the statistics back it up. It is clear in the Old Testament that God asks us to "test Him" and give the first 10% of our income to the storehouse (our church). Space doesn't allow me the opportunity to fully dispute the argument some use that we are no longer under Old Testament Law which prescribes the tithe, but suffice it to say that New Testament giving sure appears to ask us to go above and beyond the tithe. So, for the sake of defining God's guidance with regard to giving, let's just stick with the 10% target, the tithe. Based on a recent survey, only 5% of Americans tithe and the average giving rate for Christians is only 2-1/2% today compared to 3.3% during the Great Depression.

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thoughts on faithful giving - continued

So, what would it look like if believers increased their giving from 2-1/2% to 10%? It is estimated that another \$165 billion would be available for churches to use and distribute. Imagine what that could do --- experts believe that it would only take \$52 billion to relieve global hunger, illiteracy, and water and sanitation issues within five years, which would still leave \$113 billion to assist in other ways. God simply asks us to give and watch what He can do with it.

Accordingly, if you aren't tithing at this point, I encourage you to test your faith and take a step closer to that level this coming year. If you are tithing, consider stretching your faith and experience the kind of giving Paul encourages us to do in 2nd Corinthians. Together, I pray we all take the time this month as a congregation to examine our faith as it comes to giving and see what part we can play in investing in God's Plan. What an exciting opportunity!

But since you excel in everything - in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you - see that you also excel in this grace of giving. I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. - 2 Corinthians 8:7-8

Sundays throughout October

Sermon Series: Faith Jesus Noticed

Sunday, October 15

Wesley Budget Walk-through
10:15 AM - Wesley Hall

Sunday, October 29

Walk to the Cross

Sunday, November 26

a giving faith - the gift of time

Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house.

"Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it."

- Malachi 3:10

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