

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

I have really been enjoying (and being convicted by) the series of sermons preached by Pastors Hoffman and Iverson on examples of faith that Jesus noticed and prompted others to emulate. The one that has stuck with me the most, though, is the message dealing with the faith of children. I have been thinking a lot about Jesus' comments about the faith of a child and how they can apply to stewardship and how we handle our money and possessions. I love Eugene Peterson's translation of Jesus' words when He says, "I'm telling you, once and for all, that unless you return to square one and start over like children, you're not even going to get a look at the kingdom, let alone get in. Whoever becomes simple and elemental again, like this child, will rank high in God's kingdom." [Matthew 18:3-4 (The Message)] So how do I get anything related to stewardship from those words?

Well, how often do children doubt that their parents will care for them by putting food on the table and clothes on their bodies? I know it happens, but the typical American child has complete confidence in their mother and/or father to provide for them. That is FAITH!

This month, I have been asking you to examine your faith as it comes to your finances. Do you have this childlike faith when it comes to your relationship with God and the money He entrusts to you? Do you relate to the words of Jesus when he compares parenthood to God's love by saying that if a parent wouldn't give his or her child a stone if they asked for bread, then why do we ever doubt God's willingness to give us good gifts if we ask Him?

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## thoughts on faithful giving - continued

We do need to get back to square one and trust God to provide for us and get our budgetary priorities straight. We are to give God the first portion of our budget and establish the rest of our budget after that with what is left. God is asking for us to have that kind of faith!

Martha and I were at a friend's retirement party recently and as we congratulated her, she said in return, "you know, you'd be retired too if you didn't give so much of your money away!" She has no idea what we give to the church and other ministries, so I am guessing she is basing her opinion on knowing we love supporting St. Jude. But, I did the stupid thing and laughed the comment off, totally missing my chance to tell the truth. My response should have been, "I'd rather go through this life with 90% of what God has given me and have Him guiding and supporting me than going it alone with 100%."

We adults tend to believe we are entirely self-sufficient. The reality is that God is our provider and we are not really self-sufficient at all. Just as children rely on their parents, we need to set our egos aside and focus, in a childlike way, on our dependence on Him. Only then, will we be able to steward that which He has entrusted to us in a way that He will be pleased and trust us with more.

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***Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!***

- Matthew 7:9-11

***Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the first fruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.***

- Proverbs 3:9-11

***He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?***

- Romans 8:32

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**Sunday, October 29**

Walk to the Cross

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