

My “Giving” Testimony

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It began in my Jubilee year – at 50 years old in 2006 – I started tithing my income; giving 10% to the Lord, through the church I was attending. I grew up going to church sporadically and I watched as my parents put money in the offering plate; at times I’d have a coin to contribute also. It was a part of the service, right in the middle. The choir sang to keep us entertained while we waited for the shiny bowl to come our way and be passed on to the next person. It was an obligation, an expectation, a requirement. I’ve heard plenty of sermons on giving/tithing/stewardship. No matter how they spun it, it came down to the same message...we need your money!

The most memorable sermon on the subject included an object lesson, which is probably why I recall it so vividly over 40 years later. The priest stood in the pulpit and held an apple while he spoke on all the obligations families face. As he named housing he took a bite, utilities a bite, transportation a third bite, clothing another bite, and on and on nine times until he got to giving to the church. He tossed the apple core in the offering plate.

In the years that followed I gave what I could to church, though it never amounted to 10%. I gave to other charities and organizations, so I felt generous doing my part. The Scripture that touched me profoundly in 2006 was Malachi 3. God actually says “prove me” which means test Him.

⁷Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?

⁸Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

⁹Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.

¹⁰Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

On that milestone 50th birthday, I said OK Lord, I’ll test You. The first check I wrote after I got paid was to the church for 10% of what I received. To my surprise, I was able to live off the rest. I adjusted my spending as needed. It became a habit, and He blessed me. I even changed employment in my 50’s taking a lower paying job to be in a better, Godlier agency. He always provided what I needed.

Meeting Pastor Dave offered a fresh new understanding of what it means to give to the Lord. God called him to start his own church, By Your Side Ministries [BYSM]. He gave up his material wealth and status to do what he was called to do; preach the Word. He established a church based on Acts 2 and Acts 4 principles. He provided a daily evening meal and nightly Bible study. I learned more about what the scriptures say on the use of money and how to please God with it.

Matthew 25 tells the story of a man getting ready to travel so he left his wealth to his servants. They got different amounts based on their level of ability. One got five talents, one got two and another one talent. When the owner came back and settled the accounts he was pleased to see the first two had doubled his money. The last servant, however, had hidden it out of fear. The owner was so angry he took the money away and gave it to the one who now had ten talents and sent the servant to eternal punishment. God expects us to use the resources He has given us wisely.

Those of us at BYSM are similar to the early church, as described in Acts 2: 44 -45.

⁴⁴ And all that believed were together, and had all things common;

⁴⁵ And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.

Pastor Dave led the way, transferring his entire retirement check to the church account every month. When the Lord led me to retire early and help establish the BYSM Care Home, I did the same. We never take up an offering or ask for money. That is between you and God. What God ordains, He provides for. The bills get paid and all are taken care of. BYSM gives monthly to local and world-wide mission work. Additionally, we minister in practical, tangible ways to those in need in our fellowship. The church's giving often exceeds 25% of our income.

One of the most faithful tithers I know is Miss Harriette. She gets a monthly allowance of \$15 from her SSI [Supplemental Security Income] check and immediately hands \$1.50 back to Jesus with a smile on her face!

The key to this system working is total surrender of ALL to the Lord. It's a process that's taken me years. I came to understand that EVERYTHING belongs to God, the Creator, and He has given me the gifts, talents, means to make/have money and all I possess. My role is to take care of the part of the Kingdom He's given me. I encourage you to give your time, gifts, money, resources, and especially your HEART to Jesus. He will take care of you.

In His Love,

Suzanne

Following are some select verses from the KJV for reference. May they be encouraging and helpful on your journey with Jesus.

Leviticus 25

¹⁰ And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land ...

Malachi 3

⁷ Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?

⁸ Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

⁹ Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.

¹⁰ Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

Acts 2

⁴² And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

⁴³ And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.

⁴⁴ And all that believed were together, and had all things common;

⁴⁵ And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.

⁴⁶ And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,

⁴⁷ Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

Acts 4

²And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

³³And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.

³⁴Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,

³⁵And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.

Luke 8

²And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils,

³And Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him [Jesus] of their substance.

Matthew 25

¹⁴For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.

¹⁵And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.

¹⁶Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents.

¹⁷And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two.

¹⁸But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.

¹⁹After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.

²⁰And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more.

²¹ His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

²² He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them.

²³ His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

²⁴ Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed:

²⁵ And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine.

²⁶ His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed:

²⁷ Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.

²⁸ Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents.

²⁹ For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.

³⁰ And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Psalm 50

¹⁰ For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills.

¹¹ I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine.