

August 5, 2017 – Local Church Budget

A pastor once called one of his wealthy parishioners to ask for a donation to a worthy cause. The businessman replied by exclaiming, “Give! Give! Give! Is that all the church thinks about?” To which the pastor replied, “Thank you, Sir, for giving me the best definition of Christianity I’ve ever heard!”

Contrary to this, another businessman was honored with a reception recognizing his great spirit of philanthropy, his fair and honest business practices, and the pleasant man he was. After many of his friends stood up and gave their testimony of the multiple causes the businessman supported and how his business practices had benefited many, he stood up to thank everyone for their kindness. He said that all he had done was be a faithful steward. He did not claim the success of his company as his own doing. The one thing that motivated his business and religious life was that “he held nothing back from God.” (M. Lunn, *Treasures in Heaven: The Abundant Life of Stewardship* (Kansas City, MO: Nazarene Publishing House, 1963), 71, 25.)

Two different positions on stewardship and giving: one person perceived it as a grievous task while the other understood it as a core value of his life. God is not merely asking for a believer’s money. God is asking for a total surrender of life: time, talents, and treasure. He is inviting us to lose our lives so we can find them (Matthew 10:39).

Jesus gave His life as a ransom for many. He gave healing, forgiveness, and salvation. May we respond in gratitude today.

August 12 – Andrews / Loma Linda / Oakwood (World Budget)

Henrique is a Master of Divinity student at Andrews University. Recently, he went to the bank where he was offered financial advice and was asked to summarize his income and all of his expenses. When the financial counselor saw all of his expenses and meager income, he said, “You definitely need a second job”! And he added, “I see a line item in your budget of 10 percent for tithe; you should get rid of it. God would understand that you need to pay for utilities and food, wouldn’t He?”

Henrique quickly explained that tithe was non-negotiable and that he had a commitment with God to return what was His. The banker then said: “I don’t know how you are able to meet your commitments. You seem to have more expenses than income.” Henrique then answered, “I have a deal with God. I’m faithful to Him and He is faithful to me. I don’t need a second job and I don’t need to cut any line item from my budget. I simply work for God, who is rich, and He blesses me. Isn’t that a better deal?”

Henrique gave a powerful testimony that no matter how meager your salary is, being faithful to God is non-negotiable. It is not because it is an obligation, but it is because we love the One who gave all for us. “And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ” (Colossians 3:23-24).

Your offering today will allow students like Henrique to continue with their education in order to serve others. May your generous and cheerful offering today return to you blessings from above.

August 19, 2017 – Local Church Budget

Not too long ago a newly baptized member was wondering about tithing. She was questioning the nice cars and the house of the pastor in comparison to hers and most church members in that congregation. Many, especially new believers, struggle with this idea. There are times when mishandling of funds or even bad ministerial practices take place. Should believers stop tithing because of these or other reasons?

Perhaps a better question would be, “Why should believers tithe?” Ellen White, our church’s co-founder, supports five biblical reasons for tithing:

- 1. Response to Salvation.** God saved the human race by giving Jesus as the substitute for anyone who accepts this free gift. Therefore, the motivation for giving should be a response to salvation.
- 2. Everything belongs to God.** Believers understand their roles as managers of time, talents, and treasure. Therefore, believers should give because they are grateful.
- 3. Moral.** The paying of tithe is a religious and moral duty. It is explained in the Bible in Malachi 3. Withholding tithes is robbing God. Still, believers must acknowledge God as Savior and Lord first.
- 4. Mission.** In order for the Gospel to be preached in all the world, believers are called to dedicate their lives to this sacred task. Tithing allows all believers to share in this mission.
- 5. Blessings.** Tithing is the result of God’s blessings. If God had not blessed believers it would have been impossible to tithe.

We are called to be faithful to God and let Him deal with human deviations from God’s mission. May we choose to be faithful today by returning God’s tithes and giving freewill offerings for the sustainment of this building and local mission.

August 26 – Combined Youth Ministries (Conference Advance)

A circus athlete made his living showing great feats of strength to the crowds. To close his act, he usually got an orange and squeezed it with one hand until all the juice came out of it and just the skin was left. To make his part more dramatic, he would challenge anyone from the audience to come down and try to get one drop of juice out of what was left of the orange. The story says that on one occasion a very small man took the challenge. As this man made his way to the stage, the crowd laughed at the contrast of the two men. The circus athlete was big and muscular, while the man from the audience was small and weak. As the man from the audience took what was left of the orange with his right hand, he slowly but firmly began to squeeze it with all the strength he had. Suddenly the crowd stopped laughing and began focusing on what was happening. The man was not as weak as he appeared to be. In silence, the crowd watched as a drop of juice was forming on the man’s hand, soon dropping to the dusty floor. The crowd went wild observing such demonstration of strength.

The circus performer asked the man how it was possible that he had such a strong hand. The man replied jokingly, “It was not a big deal. I’m the treasurer of the local church. I practiced by arm twisting and squeezing every penny from people’s pockets.”

Although a comical anecdote, it loses its light tone when considering what many congregations do in order to awaken a sense of response from people’s pockets. May we give today to our local mission of IA-MO elementary education, Sunnysdale Academy, and Camp Heritage, from a sense of gratitude and as an act of worship.