

Tithing Dream Balloons

Each of us has dreams even from childhood. One young girl's dream may involve growing up, getting married, and having a baby to hold and love. A young person might dream of graduating from college next week or landing a great job tomorrow. A couple may dream of owning a home or opening their own business. An old person may dream of rocking a great-grandchild to sleep or watching a child succeed in the family business. Whatever they may be, our dreams motivate us to move forward. They reveal the path ahead as we navigate life, and they often provide the milestones by which we measure pleasure in our lives. Our dreams are also fragile balloons that can be blown away by a storm, burned in a fire, or cut asunder by a terminal diagnosis.

Last week, as the doctor told me there was a mass in my lung along with a spot on my spine and rib, I watched my dream balloon shatter into a million pieces and fall on the path somewhere beyond my last step. I thought of the dreams of others who would be affected if I were no longer around: my wife, my mother, and that student who is depending on me to give him the extra help he needs to pass my class so he can graduate. While none of us is indispensable, by simply existing in this world, we become a piece of matter upon which the dream balloons of others float; we are matter, and we do matter. While my mind is eager to pursue my dreams with the vigor of childhood, it now stands hourly on the physical battlefield that is my body battling the pain that pries at the fingers grasping the strings to my dream balloons. As I await the results of a biopsy and

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**This informational
pamphlet takes a fresh
look at tithing.**



other tests, I cannot even venture to guess whether my mind or pain will win the war; I do have faith that God will do what is best, and I see benefits in this experience. Whether this turns out to be fatal or physically insignificant, the experience is of great significance because it draws me closer to my thoughts and illuminates those thoughts in new ways.

As I read the Bible this past week, I kept coming back to Genesis 28:22. In that verse, Jacob promises to give back to God a tenth of everything God gives him.

Gen 28:22 And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.

My current situation has caused me to ponder this verse from two different perspectives than I had before. First, I began to examine what God provided Jacob that was of value. In the past, my mind has always envisioned sheep and money: material wealth. Today, I still think this is probably what Jacob had in mind when he made this promise to God. However, these are not nearly the most valuable gifts Jacob received from God. Time is the most precious thing God gives any of us in this life. Without time, we cannot experience any of the other blessings of God. Without time, there is no love. Without time, there is no charity. Without time, there is no enjoyment of peace. Without time, Jacob could not enjoy his family or his wealth. Without the gift of some amount of time on this earth, there is no salvation. This caused me to reevaluate tithing. For many Christians, we automatically give 10% of our income to a church or some sort of charitable work, but what if we also gave 10% of the most valuable thing God provides to us? What if we also gave 10% of our time to a church or some

sort of charitable work? As I peruse my life, I realize I have been much more selfish with my time than I have been with money. Giving away 10 cents from a dollar is relatively easy; giving away 6 minutes of every hour, 2 hours and 24 minutes a day, or 16 hours and 48 minutes a week seems much more daunting. I'm sure there are people out there who work full time and still manage to volunteer 2 ½ hours a day, but I do not know any of them. As I selfishly grumbled at this new thought coming over me, I thought of the many scriptures which support this idea. While Christ did say we should be providing the things money can buy for the poor such as food, drink, shelter, and clothing, He also said we should be giving our time by visiting the sick and imprisoned. See Matthew 25:34 – 40 for one example of this.

Mat 25:34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

Mat 25:35 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

Mat 25:36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

Mat 25:37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

Mat 25:38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

Mat 25:39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

Mat 25:40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

My uncertainty of giving God back 1/10th of the time He is giving me led me to another perspective on Gen 28:22 which made me feel

ashamed. If we look at the promise Jacob made to God, it seems like a good deal from Jacob's point of view. Jacob is saying the equivalent of "God, you give me a dollar, and I will give you 10 cents back." Who would not be willing to trade 10 cents for a dollar? But, if we look at this from God's point of view, the prospect is much less inviting. How many of us would be willing to trade our dollar for 10 cents?

Suddenly, the idea of giving God a measly 17 hours out of the 168 hours He gives me each week seems a lot more attractive.

Perhaps, there are pastors out there speaking of tithing time, but I have never heard that concept taught from the pulpit. I have heard plenty of sermons speaking of giving money, but never one about tithing our most precious commodity: time. As tithing money looks very different for different people, I suppose tithing time must also look differently for different people. Perhaps part of tithing our time may simply be spending time in the Bible or praying for others, but certainly, some portion of our time tithe must be physical and must be directed outward toward other people. For one person, that may be volunteering at a homeless shelter, food bank, or group home. For another, it may involve visiting people in a nursing home, prison, or boarding school. This must be an individual decision based on the interests and abilities of the person making that choice. I cannot say exactly what my time tithe will develop into or even if I have the time left to see it fully develop, but this experience has taught me that tithing time is a dream balloon worth grasping because it will help support the dream balloons of others.