

PK's Perspectives... Self-centered

I was listening to a friend's lament about financial difficulty and at some point I interjected a comment about tithing because I knew my friend to be a Jesus follower. I was mostly curious if my friend's financial landscape included honoring God with a tithe. Here is the response I received: "I tried it and it didn't work." I'm like, "What do you mean you tried it?" and my friend responded, "I tithed out of a paycheck one time and it didn't work." My friend was using me as a soundboard for a host of financial stratagems that might possibly rectify his financial straightjacket and his response to my question about tithing let me know that he viewed tithing as a way to get more money. He tithed one time; when a check for \$10 or \$100 or \$1000 did not mysteriously appear in his mailbox, he deduced that tithing didn't work and moved on in his search for a magic financial fix.

I don't think my friend's attitude about tithing is uncommon. Consciously or not, much of what we do is motivated by a self-centered bottom line of "What will this benefit me?" Like the person who selflessly cares for an ailing friend...only to be offended that they didn't receive a healthy portion of the estate upon the friend's death. Or the person who goes above and beyond in the workplace but quits when he or she doesn't receive the expected promotion or pay increase. Or the person who, being certain that management would want to know such things, politely shares the fact of finding a hair in the entrée and then is incredulous when an offer of free food is not forthcoming. Don't even get me started on the woman who produces tears when Mr. State Patrol Man asks for her license and switches to vituperation when he issues a speeding ticket anyway! Surely you've heard someone say, "I don't attend Sunday School/church anymore; I wasn't getting anything out of the class/service."

Not only do we tend to be a bit self-centered, we humans are also incredibly impatient. If one month of going to the gym doesn't get us back to our high school weight, then it obviously doesn't work. If one week of drinking only water doesn't make our skin look youthful, then it obviously doesn't work. If fasting for two days doesn't produce the answer I need, then fasting is obviously a spiritual hoax. If tithing one time doesn't increase the balance of my checking account, it obviously doesn't work, either!

Tithing is not about you. Tithing is not even about supporting your church although God has designed the church to be the steward of your offerings. Neither is tithing a formula for leveraging future blessing. Tithing is an act of worship; an expression of passion and love and trust and obedience from you to your Father. Tithing is a gift you offer your Father and the joy of knowing your Father's pleasure is the limit of the blessing you seek. Those things that may accrue to your life as a result of selfless giving – supernatural provision, financial self discipline, a generous heart, freedom from the love of money - do so over the course of a lifetime...many of the blessings visible only in the rearview of life. There is most definitely a divine link between faithful giving and experiencing the waterfall of God's blessing in your life; God, however, is the initiator of that supernatural link. God is most interested in the heart of the giver! Richard Braunstein says, "It is possible to give without loving; but it is impossible to love without giving." If your giving flows from a heart that seeks to coerce God's blessing in your life, you will probably end up living on the same dead-end street as my friend; the friend who said, "I tried it and it didn't work." Cya in Sunday School & Worship, PK.