

THIS IS FOR YOU

Genesis 28:18-22
Matthew 23:23-24

Faith Community
November 11, 2007

Introduction

This year we emphasize all that Faith Community does FOR YOU. You've heard minutes for mission the last few weeks asking you to consider investing in this place, which is here for you.

We provide a Christian community that serves everyone from toddlers in the nursery, hearing their first Bible stories, to the Primetimers retiree group meeting and laughing and supporting each other. LOGOS helps kids have fun, make important friendships, and learn about the Bible in a relaxed, enjoyable atmosphere.

We offer youth groups for all our kids from fifth to twelfth grade. We have continuous, ongoing Bible study for adults, meeting at least three times every week, which provide in-depth understanding, an opportunity to ask questions, and the chance to learn from others in the class. We are just starting a new group for parents of children four years and younger. This congregation offers so much for everyone from the youngest to the oldest.

Most importantly we provide worship. We gather together here from different places, with different concerns, with different ways of looking at the world. But here we are all together to worship our God. Here you are reminded that not only is Faith Community here for you, God is here for you.

I

This morning I need to talk frankly with you. We have seen some wonderful things happen in the last year; we have also had some negative developments as well.

We have the largest Bible study group ever in our history. More than twenty people have committed to thirty weeks of studying the Bible from Genesis to Revelations.

This year we added a new fifth to sixth grade youth group, with Haeley leading that group. We have grown in our depth of commitment to faith, we have celebrated weddings, and all participated in the sacrament of baptism. It has been a wonderful year of growth.

On the other hand, we have had to face some difficulties. We have had some problems with the building that have been time consuming and expensive.

This past summer the Children's Ark, which rented space from us for more than a decade, closed its doors. This means that we now have our entire Fellowship hall available, but it also means we have \$21,000 less income. The Ark last paid rent in August. We go into 2008 needing to make up \$21,000 in new income just to stay even.

There is no room to make deeper cuts in our budget without sitting in cold classrooms or allowing the building to deteriorate. Surely, no staff will receive raises; some may need to be reduced or eliminated. This is all to say, your church needs your help.

II

I would consider this a crisis, except that we are able to meet it without enormous sacrifice. Our current pledged income is \$320,000. If the average household in this church makes a total of \$70,000 (I know that is very low) and each household tithed (gave 10% of their income) our budget would not be \$320,000, but \$1,120,000.

If each household even gave half a tithe (5% of income) our budget would be \$560,000, nearly twice what it is today. We clearly have it within us to meet the challenge before us.

I ask you, as I always have, to pray about tithing. It is the biblical standard, found in both the Old Testament and New Testament. It's a sign that you not only believe but are committed to doing Christ's work.

If you don't think it is possible to take the full step to tithing in one year, I ask you to take a one percent step closer. Increase you pledge next year by one percent of your total income. (If you make \$50,000, one percent is only \$500, which is less than \$10 per week).

III

Your giving helps our church family enormously, but it will help you even more. One of the laws of God is that in giving we receive. When we give, we get more than we gave. I've seen the truth of that everywhere in my life. We've given time and money to go on mission trips and come back with far more than we could ever have offered.

In most wedding services I do, I say that in giving your self in this marriage you do not have less than you had before; you have a great deal more. When I gave myself to Sheila 38 years ago, I had no idea how much of a blessing that would be. If I had held back, if I had been afraid, I would be so much less now.

When you give to this church, you get in return. Yes, you receive programs for yourself and your kids, educational opportunities, new friends, and the chance to help other people.

But you also get to know you are putting your faith to work in an effective way. You have the satisfaction of knowing that you are helping our kids grow in faith, you are investing in Christ's ministry right in your own hometown as well as on the other side of the world. *Most of all, your commitment demonstrates that you align what you believe with what you do.* That what you say about faith is matched by what you do with that faith.

Conclusion

Just a couple of weeks ago I had a conversation with a man who is not a member of this church. He's a Methodist. He told me about a special appeal that his church is doing and how he responded to it.

It was an on-going campaign and it was set up so that you could put your pledge or gift in the offering or you could drop it in a box in the church office. He wondered for some time what he should do about his contribution to this need.

He said to me, "You know what I did? I went to the bank and I withdrew a very sizable amount of money from my savings account. As I was filling out the withdrawal slip, I thought to

myself, 'Are you crazy? You don't have this kind of money.' But I'll tell you I felt like the Holy Spirit was whispering to me 'Don't worry. It will be alright.'"

He said he withdrew the money in cash, put it in an envelope, sealed it, and went to the church and put it in the box.

I asked, "Why did you give it as cash?" I was thinking about the tax implications.

He said, "I gave it in cash because I didn't want it to be for my glory. I didn't want anyone to say, 'What a great thing he has done.' I didn't want my pride to get in the way."

I heard this account from the viewpoint of a church leader, so I pictured the campaign people opening the envelopes at the end of the day, seeing that huge donation, and not knowing who it came from, because the giver felt that it didn't matter who gave it. He gave that generous amount for the mission of Christ in the world. It was a blessing.

Amen