

# The Fear of the OP! (offering plate)



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Devotions for 2011

### Some Guidelines

Thank you for your willingness to pray and study this week about the area of your financial resources. This week, many of the Wildwood family have made the same commitment you have, to go through this devotional booklet. The purpose of this booklet is to provide a guideline for you and your family to spend time in prayer, bible reading, and meditation as you make a decision about your giving for the next twelve months. All of the topics in this booklet deal with the area of our treasure. If you have spent the week in prayer and bible study, then God will direct your decision.

I encourage you to set aside a specific time in the day for this booklet. It might be in the morning before everyone heads off to work and school. It could be during the supper time each evening. Spend this time as a family, praying and reading God's word together.

On Friday or Saturday, as a family, make a decision as to your giving in 2012. Then mark the card provided (at the end of this document as well as at WCC on Nov 20) and bring it with you to church on Sunday, November 20th or 27th. During the message on the 20th, you will have the opportunity to turn in your commitment. If you are unable to attend, then bring it with you the next Sunday and place it in the offering plate.

## ***God Smiles When We Obey***

“Noah did everything exactly as God had commanded him” (Genesis 6:22 NLT).

Noah obeyed completely (no instruction was overlooked) and he obeyed exactly (in the way and time God wanted it done). That is wholeheartedness. It is no wonder God smiled on Noah.

If God asked you to build a giant boat, don't you think you might have a few questions, objections, and reservations? Noah didn't. He obeyed God wholeheartedly. That means doing whatever God asks without reservation or hesitation. You don't procrastinate and say, “I'll pray about it.” You do it without delay.

God doesn't owe you an explanation or reason for everything he asks you to do. Understanding can wait, but obedience can't. Instant obedience will teach you more about God than a lifetime of Bible discussions. In fact, you will never understand some commands until you obey them first. Obedience unlocks understanding.

Often we try to offer God partial obedience. We want to pick and choose the commands we obey. We make a list of the commands we like and obey those while ignoring the ones we think are unreasonable, difficult, expensive, or unpopular. I'll attend church but I won't tithe. I'll read my Bible but I won't forgive the person who hurt me. Yet partial obedience is disobedience.

Wholehearted obedience is done joyfully with enthusiasm. The Bible says, “Obey him gladly” (Psalm 100:2 LB). This is the attitude of David: “Just tell me what to do and I will do it, Lord. As long as I live I'll wholeheartedly obey” (Psalm 119:33 LB).

James, speaking to Christians, said, “We please God by what we do and not only by what we believe” (James 2:24 CEV). God's Word is clear that you can't earn your salvation. It comes only by grace, not your effort. But as a child of God you can bring pleasure to your heavenly Father through obedience.

Any act of obedience is also an act of worship. Why is obedience so pleasing to God? Because it proves you really love him. Jesus said, “If you love me, you will obey my commandments” (John 14:15 TEV).

### Prayer

Lord Jesus, help me to obey you wholeheartedly like Noah. I invite you to show me the areas I am not obeying You in.

*Written by Rick Warren*

### ***Investing in God's Global Fund***

“We must support believers who go on trips like this so that we can work together with them in spreading the truth.” 3 John 1:8 (GW)

God wants us to use some money to take the Good News around the world! We invest in eternity every time we use money to bring others to Jesus.

When you save to go on a mission trip, that's an investment in God's Global Fund. When you help others go on mission trip, that's an investment in God's Global Fund.

This also includes using our money to encourage our friends to trust in Jesus (Luke 16:9). Imagine when you die and get to Heaven, your friends will welcome you there and say, “Thank you for investing in me. I'm in Heaven because of you! I'm not your friend for life; I'm your friend for eternity. I'm in Heaven because you cared enough. You bought me a Bible. You bought me a ticket for an event. You gave me a Christian book.”

Others will say, “You spent your money to help spread the Good News to my village, even though you'd never seen us before. Because you gave, I'm now a follower of Christ, and I'm in Heaven because of you.”

Helping others find Jesus is the highest use of your money. How will you invest in God's Global Fund? Will you go on a mission trip or provide funds so someone else can go on a mission trip? Will you give so that your friends will hear about Jesus?

Written by Rick Warren

### ***Trust, the Ultimate Test***

To trust where we cannot trace God is the ultimate test of our willingness to follow Him. There are times in every believer's life when God requires him to step out into the unknown--to take a leap of faith--to go out on a limb. These occasions almost always defy our ability to reason and to make sense of it all.

Abraham faced a similar predicament when he was commanded by God to go to a foreign country leaving behind all the securities and familiarity his homeland had offered. Hebrews 11:8 records that "By faith Abraham . . . obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going." And later he was commended by God for His unswerving faith despite the overwhelming obstacles that he faced. Reverend Charles Inwood wrote that "When God is going to do something wonderful, he begins with a difficulty." . . . When he is going to do something miraculous, "He begins with an impossibility." God loves to defy odds, accomplish the impossible, operate in the supernatural, and amaze us with His creativity and power. We serve a big God---not one that is confined and limited to our understanding and our ability to figure out His ways. A God so awesome, and so infinitely capable of accomplishing His will in our lives, deserves our trust and obedience. If He could create the world in 6 short days, He can certainly figure out how to work out the details of your life and order your steps appropriately.

Today God is calling you to step out in faith and trust Him. Psalm 31:15 says, "My times are in your hands." Rest assured that God has you in His hands and if you know Him as your Savior He won't let go of you. Someone once said "To have a testimony you first need to have a test." Don't fear or shrink back from what God has appointed you to do. Today is the day of decision. God is asking you to believe that His power will equip you for what you are called to do. If He didn't think you were ready He would not have chosen you. The God who sees the beginning from the end, knows that this time of trusting Him in the midst of your doubts and fears is necessary preparation for upcoming blessings and the manifestation of His power. Romans 8:18 says, "Our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us." And that is a promise you can count on!

Written by KnowJesus.com devotionals

### ***Investing in God's Treasury Fund***

“Honor the Lord by giving him the first part of all your income.” Proverbs 3:9 (TLB)

We invest in God's Treasury Fund by using some of our money to express worship. There's nothing we can give God that he needs, and God certainly doesn't need our money.

But when we give an offering to God — an undesignated, planned, and proportional offering where and when we worship — we're saying, “God I love you.” That's the first purpose of life: to know and love God. You're planned for his pleasure.

The Bible says, “Honor the Lord by giving him the first part of all your income” (Proverbs 3:9 TLB). We honor God when we tithe. It's an act of worship.

God wants you to give to this fund before you invest in any of the other funds. Why? He wants our hearts more than anything else. He doesn't want our money; he wants what it represents.

Wherever I put my money shows my priorities and values.

This week, look through your checkbook and your credit card statements. What do they say about where your heart is today?

Where do you want your heart to be? Put your money there!

Why does God want us to invest in His fund first?

#### Prayer

Thank you, Lord, for the many opportunities to express my love to you. Help me to honor you by investing in your kingdom before my own.

Written by Rick Warren

### ***Spiritual Habits of Effective People: Tithing***

Ask someone to read Deuteronomy 14:23

We develop spiritual fitness when we honor God by giving him a tithe every week. Tithing is the spiritual habit of giving back to God the first 10 percent of all I make. If I make \$100, I give \$10 back to God; if I make \$1000, I give \$100 back to God. I get to keep 90 percent but I give 10 percent to him.

Why would anybody have to do that? Because God says so and that's reason enough. If you don't do it, you're disobeying God. But there's more reason. The reason I tithe is to draw me closer to God.

Jesus says, *"Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be"* (Matthew 6:21 NLT). If I put my money in a boat, that's where my affection goes. Wherever I put my money, that's what becomes important to me. If I put God first when it comes to my money, it says, "God, you're first in my life."

If you show me how you spend your time and how you spend your money, I'll show you what's important in your life. No matter what you say is important—show me your schedule and your checkbook stubs and I'll tell you what's really important to you.

Deuteronomy 14:23 explains that, "The purpose of tithing is to teach you to always put God first in your lives" (LB). If I say, "God, I want you to be number one in my life," but he's last place in my budget, that's a contradiction.

The Bible teaches that giving is an antidote to materialism. The materialism of the world says, "Get, get, get." The only antidote is giving; we do just the opposite of what the world says. As I learn to hold things with an open hand and return the first part to God, it breaks the grip of materialism in my life. It helps me develop the characteristics of God because "God so loved the world that he gave" (John 3:16). If you want to become like Jesus, you must learn to be a giver.

Written by Rick Warren

### ***Some Questions Answered***

#### ***Why have a stewardship commitment time?***

Giving is an important part of the life of a believer. Giving is really a statement of who or what we trust in. The bible teaches that our level of giving is an indicator of our level of trust. Proverbs 3:9, "Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops." So rather than going to the congregation from month to month asking for money, we are asking each family to make a commitment for one year.

#### ***What if I feel I am giving all I can?***

All God asks is that we put Him first in the area of giving. We are not asking anyone to give more than they are able. Many at Wildwood are giving a significant proportion of their income to the Lord. We are simply challenging everyone to enjoy the benefits and blessings of giving.

#### ***What if my families financial situation changes during the next 12 months?***

This is not a binding contract and no one will be knocking on your door if your giving changes. Everyone realizes situations change: extra health expenses, a job layoff, or other factors will change your income and force you to give less. You may get a raise or a large bonus from your company, which could allow you to give more. Because you are committing to a percentage, your income might change, but the percentage won't have to.

#### ***What is a good percentage for my family to give?***

This is a decision between your family and God. The Old Testament commanded a Jew to give a tithe, which is 10% of their income. That was the minimum of their giving. This percentage is a great place for a believer to consider. So we challenge you to consider tithing, giving 10% of your income.

#### ***Why are we committing a percentage rather than a specific dollar amount?***

You may be giving 12% of your income and be giving less dollars than someone who is only giving 3%. It is not the specific amount that is important. It is the proportion to your total income that God is concerned about.

#### ***Is the Leadership giving in a committed way?***

YES! We would not be asking any person to do anything we are not willing to do ourselves. The Elders and ministers all give 10% or more of their income to this church and the ministry here.

### **Trusting In ... GOD!**

I am making a decision to put my security in God! With that in mind, this is my/our commitment to the Lord and Wildwood Christian Church for the next 12 months. This commitment is based upon my circumstances as God blesses. It is made with the understanding that my circumstances may change.

My / Our commitment to  
Wildwood Christian Church is  
\_\_\_\_\_ % of our income.



- We will try tithing (10% of our income) for the next \_\_\_\_\_ months.
- We are already giving 10% or more of our income to Wildwood.
- Committed giving is new to us, but we are giving it a try and trusting God to provide.