

The Integral Role of Giving

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You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. -Deuteronomy 6:5

One of the most common things I hear from people when they're explaining why such-and-such family member or friend doesn't attend church is that their family member/friend believes the church is out to get their money.

I heard this so much at my last church in rural Missouri that one day, when a church member said this about their brother, I replied, "He's exactly right. We're totally out to get his money." The member kind of stared at me with a smile, expecting that I was joking, but I wasn't. Instead, I continued: "We want him and his heart and his faith, courage, strength, determination, questioning nature, loyalty, commitment to good efforts and all the other beautiful things about him...and we want his money. We want all of him just like God wants all of him."

Many of us have likely heard the story about a person who wanted to be baptized but when their time for immersion came, they paused to remove their wallet and hold it out of the water. It's a ridiculous picture to imagine. And the ridiculousness highlights the truth: it is impossible to step into the embrace of God, commit ourselves to discipleship with Christ, and hold our wallets aloft and separate. God wants all of us, and there is nothing that we are or that we have which doesn't get immersed.

I don't encourage my church's members to give because I'm fearful about meeting the church's needs or my needs; I encourage my church's members to give because I love them enough to point to full immersion in God's love and their walk of faith. I want them to know the joy of giving their whole self -- all their heart, all their soul, all their might, and...enough of their wallet's contents that they feel they've faithfully given all which they could from that too.

May all our heart, all our soul and all our might lead each of us deeper into the joyful, all-in possibilities of God.