

Sermon Title: **Spiritual Discipline 2 - My Stewardship Story**

Bible: Psalm 24:1-5 & Matthew 6:24

Where & When: Sunday Service at Gilroy UMC on October 27th, 2019

Audience: about 34 English-speaking Church Members

Opening Prayer

Gracious God, all things come from you! I remember you, Lord, when I receive and when I give. You are the source of healing, joy, and hope. Please be with my lips in your love and grace. In Jesus' name. Amen.

1. Introduction of Spiritual Life Questions & 2020 Stewardship Campaign

How is your soul? I started to collect Spiritual Life Surveys beginning a couple of weeks ago, in order to serve this church more and better. Today's message is about one of my answers, and for the 2020 Stewardship Campaign.

2. One of My Spiritual Disciplines - Tithing and Giving

The first question on the Spiritual Life Questionnaire is "In which spiritual discipline(s) do you want to grow?" There are many choices: Weekly Worship, Daily Bible Reading, Daily Prayer, Frequency of Communion, Service to Others, Fasting or Abstinence, Tithing/Giving, and Family Prayer. You can also create your own spiritual disciplines category. How many types of disciplines will you checkoff? All of these? Three? Two? Because I am a pastor, should I mark all of these? No, I cannot do all of them. One of my choices is Tithing and Giving.

3. The Reason Why I Chose Tithing and Giving

The reason why I chose Tithing and Giving is that I want to be free from money: freedom from money. This does not mean that I do not care about money. Money is essential to live. I cannot neglect the power of money. In the last year of my seminary, I almost gave up my studies, because of tuition and living expenses. My wife and I considered going back to Korea. My parents and my parents-in-law still have to work, even though they ought to be able to retire, according to their age. To make money is very important. However, to love money is not my purpose. I will make money as much as I can like John Wesley says. But I do not want to pursue money at the expense of my soul, my family, and my God. So, I chose tithing and giving as one of my spiritual disciplines, not to be a slave of money, but to be a freeman of money, and a master of money.

4. My Goals for Tithing/Giving

As a Christian who has a Korean DNA, I have very strict goals about tithing and giving. I have goals for my spiritual disciplines, but this does not mean that I always achieve my goals. I just try to do my best, just as I practice with my tongue, in order to speak English more fluently. To me, tithing means taking out 10% of my income, and giving it first--10% of my income first! And I give this tithe to my faith community. Where is my faith community? Here, this church. I believe that God created this church, and God is the Lord alone in this church. Before being the pastor of this church, I am one of the members, like all of you. In this church, I am healed; I am loved, and I am and will be a more loving and mature Christian. To me, there is no difference

between you and me. I just take the position of this church's pastor. So, my goal is giving 10% of my income first to this church.

From the other 90% of my income, I want to give more through Sunday Worship Offering and Relief Offering. I want to build up the muscle of generosity. I learned Sunday Worship Offering from my parents. When I was a kid, I could not make money. My parents taught me to prepare Sunday Worship Offering. I started with coins; one penny, one nickel, one dime, and one quarter. In this way, giving becomes one of my spiritual disciplines. Sunday Worship is both receiving from God and giving to God, both to be healed and loved by God, and to love God and others, in mutual relationship. It is like having a coffee or a meal with friends. Relief Offering means giving to those who are in need. One of my favorite pastors shares his way of giving relief offering: he gives one day's income. At least for one day, he wants to remember and help those who are in need in our busy life.

5. My Effort to Achieve My Goals

Do I achieve these goals? No. Not always. I am just on the way from where I am to the goals. My wife and I have a finance meeting at least once a month. Thankfully, we plan our budget with tithing and giving. It is challenging. Sometimes when we need to pay unexpected expenses, tithing and giving are very difficult. According to our financial situation, we change the percentage of the tithe, and give less. But we try not to give up giving as our spiritual discipline. That's because I have money, freedom, muscles of generosity, and my God as the Lord.

6. Two Scriptures

I wonder how you read today's scriptures. I read the second reading as a warning to me, as a pastor. I am so sad to see that some great Korean pastors in Korea have not been honest about money. To make a long story short, it turned out that they used church money like their own money. I am not different from them. I am a normal and weak person in the face of money. I should be more careful not to serve money, but to serve God.

I read Psalm 24 as a gentle invitation from God for giving as being a spiritual discipline. The Earth belongs to God. The seas and the rivers belong to God. And it feels like God tells me, "Hwapyoung, this purse belongs to me." At first, I was surprised and afraid that my God was so greedy. God has the Sun and the Earth, the seas, and the rivers. Now, does God want to have my money? While I am doing giving as my spiritual practice, I understand God's intention. (Slide of Personal Trainer) God wants to be my Personal Trainer. According to my body, my financial situation, God wants to help me to build up the muscle of generosity, and have freedom from serving money. I believe that this is the very blessing from God!

Closing Prayer

Gracious God, we are your children. We want to grow in your grace and love. Guide us and lead us! We want to invite you as our personal trainer for our spiritual discipline. Please pour out your love and grace upon us. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Possible Qs.

1. What spiritual discipline do you practice or want to have?
2. Do you have any spiritual discipline related to money?