



horizons

S E E I N G B E Y O N D

TITHING BUT...

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The other day I was visiting with a young man who was a part of the Big Brothers Big Sisters program. He was telling me about his father who lived in another city but one not too far away from the boy. He said that his Dad faithfully sends a check in for his child support and will buy him a birthday and Christmas present, but rarely expresses a desire to be with him. As he spoke you could see the hurt in his eyes and on his face. He said that even in the summer when he goes to see his Dad that the father is often very busy and sends him off to a cousin or family friend. It was great to get the money, but more than anything the boy wanted the love. He wanted a relationship with his father that his father obviously did not want for himself.

It was not long after that I found myself talking with a woman who was very angry with her ex-husband for calling their child and talking a lot with the child and wanting to come be with the child, but who would not pay child support or purchase school supplies. She said, "He thinks the money is just hurting me and not his son, but it is hurting the son. I cannot buy him all the things he needs for school or even to get dressed properly. The attention is nice but it is hollow without something behind it for groceries and all."

All of this got me thinking about how I feel about tithing. I have been a long time tither giving God at least 10% of what I earned and on occasion I have lapsed into thinking that now that I have done that I can just do with everything else exactly as I please. I have also known a number of persons who wanted to trade tithing for time assuming that God had some sort of point system and they would get enough from one area to substitute for another.

I found myself remembering Matt 23:23 where Jesus said to paraphrase, "you tithe...but..." Jesus was not saying that giving the tithe was bad, not at all. He was saying that only giving the tithe and not loving God or loving our neighbor was to totally miss the point. It was not our money that Jesus was after, but a relationship. He was saying that God wants us to be in a loving relationship with him more than anything else. Tithing is and should be one part of that expression of love. I should not want to tithe so I will get something in return. I should want to at least tithe because of the simple fact that I love God and am so grateful for all He has done for me.

A father who says he wants to have a relationship with a child but refuses to share a portion of his wealth with him is not a father who truly loves his child. A father on the other hand who only sends his child money, no matter how much, but does not desire to spend time with him, is not a father that loves his child. Both reflect a person who is too much in love with themselves and what they value more than a loving relationship – money or time.

Tithing is important to me and it is necessary for me. Not so I get points or will go to heaven. It is necessary for me to have and sustain a loving relationship with my heavenly Father and that is necessary for me to live.