

Four Tough Questions

You probably noticed the countdown theme by now.

- Investing in 2006: Six Hot Investment Tips (January/ February)
- Five Purchases You Can't Afford Not to Make (March)

Now this month (April): *Four Tough Questions*. Why ask tough questions? And seriously, why ask four tough questions? Isn't this a little over the top?

Not really, especially if we are going to be serious about our faith and our walk with Christ. If you consider yourself a *Casual Christian*, a *Weekend Warrior*, or *Religiously Relaxed*, then don't read on because this article will probably mean very little to you. However, if you are interested in deepening your faith and your walk with the Lord, you need to grapple with the following questions.

- 1) ***Do you experience joy when you serve and give to the church?***
- 2) ***Do you serve and give out of an overflowing love for Jesus and His great sacrifice for you?***
- 3) ***Do you believe in serving and giving to advance the cause of Christ and to store up eternal treasures for yourself in heaven?***
- 4) ***Do you believe that giving and serving is an antidote to materialism that will break materialism's hold on your heart? (Do you serve God or money?)***

If you were looking for a quick read as you stir spaghetti sauce on the stove, you should probably pick up today's newspaper. This month's Windows Article is definitely a sit on the couch or at the desk so you can ponder and reflect article

Do you experience joy when you serve and give to the church?

Here at First Church we have an incredibly generous congregation. Nearly everyday our facilities are busy with work being done in the Lord's name. Our mission's budget is nearly 20% of our overall budget and we strongly stand behind Youth and Children's Ministry and Activities. As a member of First Church, you are a participant in this! Does this bring you joy or make you angry? How invested are you in the Lord's work? How often do you serve the church in some way? Do you take seriously your financial and 'hands-on' support of the church and her work, or you more of a 'hands-off' person? God tells us there is something wrong, something out of alignment, if

we are not experiencing joy as we serve. I urge you in your own Bible or in the printed Scripture at the end of this article, to read about the Macedonian's Example in II Corinthians 8:1-15.

Do you serve and give out of an overflowing love for Jesus and His great sacrifice for you?

If you didn't read the Scripture after the first point, go back and read it now. You need it for this point as well ☺ In verse nine, we are reminded that Jesus chose to give His life for us, so that we might have eternal life. Without him doing that for us, we would be condemned to spend eternity apart from God (hell). Our service and our giving should be done out of our love, respect, appreciation and gratitude for what Jesus did for us on the cross.

We can't pay him back. We shouldn't serve and give out of guilt, or do it begrudgingly. Maybe the reason we are sometimes "off" in our attitude and hence serving and giving is because we haven't slowed down to really consider and reflect on exactly what it is Jesus gave us: ETERNAL LIFE! Our service and giving to the church should be done out of an overflowing love for Jesus and his great sacrifice for you!

Do you believe in serving and giving to advance the cause of Christ and to store up eternal treasures for yourself in heaven?

When you hear the word *Genesis*, what do you think of, the first book of the Bible? Well back in the 80's and 90's, when people heard the word *Genesis*, a lot of them thought of Phil Collins and his band named *Genesis*. They had some big hair songs like *Invisible Touch* and *Groovy Kind of Love*. An artist who was friends with Phil Collins was named Don Henley. Did you ever hear the song on his 'End of the Innocence' album called, *Give Me What You Got?* The lyrics went like this:

*From Main Street to Wall Street to Washington
From men to women to men
It's a nation of noses pressed up against the glass
They've seen it on the TV
And they want it pretty fast
You spend your whole life
Just pilin' it up there
You got stacks and stacks and stacks
Then, Gabriel comes and taps you on the shoulder,
But you don't see no hearses with luggage racks*

Now if that's not a Biblical perspective, I don't know what is. The bottom line is we bring nothing into this world and we'll take nothing out of it. One day we will be judged by if we surrendered our lives to Christ and according to what we did while on earth to further the Kingdom of God. It's not a bribe but simply a fact that Scripture tells us our

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serving Christ will build up for us treasures in heaven. It's a little like an employer matching your contribution into your 401K. So as we serve out of love and with joy, we are also storing treasure in heaven, wow! (Along with the Scripture at the end of the article, check out the sweet hymn titled, *This World is Not My Home* and I Timothy 6:6-10.)

Do you believe that giving and serving is an antidote to materialism, which will break materialism's hold on your heart? (Do you serve God or money?)

If we're still being honest with each other, I cringe sometimes as I see how materialism has crept into my life. I have an ipod, I like to drive a fairly decent car (Saturn station wagon, thank you very much), I like to go to the movies and on vacation. By the end of the day, I am not always satisfied with where my motivations or where my mind have been. It is a fight isn't it. Our actions **MUST** be strategic every moment of the day if we are going to serve God. Otherwise, our default mode will be to just go-with-the-flow and participate in the consumeristic non-God honoring trends of society. We battle this by being strategic and intentional about when we get up, reading Scripture the first thing every morning, listening to music that glorifies God and directs our minds, serving others, and being invested in our church. If we are too busy to participate in these things because we always have something else to do, or if we are only doing these things occasionally, it is obvious who we are serving with our lives.

(A great book about spiritual warfare is John White's, [The Fight](#). You can get it from CBD, www.christianbook.com, for \$9.99. The stock number is WW7770. Also see Matthew 6:1-4 & 19-24)

So there you have it, Four Tough Questions to consider. I hope they help. As we grow in our faith and in our relationships with one another together, let's not be afraid to ask and grapple with these types of questions. Spiritual check-ups are the best preventative medicine. Let me know what you think.

Walking with you,
Michael

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Next month's article, *Three Firm Resolutions*
(Expect a Great Hymn to be included as well)

Scripture & Hymns To Go With April's Windows Article

I Thessalonians 4:12-24

12Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. 13Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other. 14And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone.

15Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else.

16Be joyful always; 17pray continually; 18give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

19Do not put out the Spirit's fire; 20do not treat prophecies with contempt. 21Test everything. Hold on to the good. 22Avoid every kind of evil.

23May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.

I Corinthians 2:1-15

1And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. 2Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. 3For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, 4they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. 5And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will. 6So we urged Titus, since he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. 7But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us—see that you also excel in this grace of giving.

8I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. 9For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

10And here is my advice about what is best for you in this matter: Last year you were the first not only to give but also to have the desire to do so.

11Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means. 12For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable

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according to what one has, not according to what he does not have.

13Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. 14At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality, 15as it is written: "He who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little did not have too little."

1 Timothy 6:6-10

6But godliness with contentment is great gain. 7For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. 8But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. 9People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. 10For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

Matthew 6:1-4

1"Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

2"So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. 3But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Matthew 6:19-24

19"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

22"The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light.

23But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

24"No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.

Two Hymns for Your Consideration

This World is Not My Home

This world is not my home,

I'm just a pass-ing thru,
My treas-ures are laid up
Some-where be-yond the blue;
The an-gels beck-on me
from heav-en's o-pen door.
And I can't feel at home
in this world an-y more.

Chorus- O Lord, you know,
I have no friend like You,
If heav-en's not my home,
then, Lord, what will I do?
The an-gels beck-on me
from heav-en's o-pen door.
And I can't feel at home
in this world an-y more.

Verse 2- They're all expecting me,
and that's one thing I know
My Savior pardoned me
and now I onward go:
I know He'll take me thru
tho I am weak and poor,
And I can't feel at home
in this world any more.

Verse 3- Just up in gloryland
we'll live eternally
The saints on ev'ry hand
are shouting victory,
Their songsd of sweetest praise
drift back from heaven's shore,
And I can't feel at home
in this world any more.

Mansion Over The Hilltop

I'm satisfied with just a cottage below
A little silver and a little gold
But in that city where the ransomed will shine
I want a gold one that's silver lined

Chorus- I've got a mansion just over the hilltop
In that bright land where we'll never grow old
And some day yonder we will never more wander
But walk on streets that are purest gold

Verse 2- Don't think me poor or deserted or lonely
I'm not discouraged I'm heaven bound
I'm but a pilgrim in search of the city
I want a mansion, a harp and a crown

(Does anyone else know these?)