

Testimony by Anna Smith: Sunday, October 13, 2024

Greg and I made a commitment early in our marriage that we would not live a compartmentalized life.

We considered the fact that God gave us 100% of our life and we owe him 100% back. It is 100% his—

We believe this includes all aspects of our life—our time, our recreation, our work and our money.

At first this was easy—newly married, he was paramedic firefighter in Chicago and I worked for a college.

We were **double income, no kids.**

First time salaries with benefits.

10% was no big deal! We could give to God and have lots left over for ourselves!

We left Chicago and moved to Pittsburgh to seminary. Greg went to school full time and I worked full time at a local college. We were not struggling with our finances.

It was now **one income, no kids** and we were doing ok.

After tithing, there was still money left for us!

The first time the money aspect was truly tested was after seminary.

We are not the most conventional of people. So instead of going to be an assistant at a church, we prayed about and felt called to church plant.

—in Colorado where it was only 30% Christian at that time.

We created a board, raised money and had many Episcopalians who supported us. One woman on our board said, “I’m going to support this because you’re young and dumb. You’re dumb enough to try it and young enough to bounce back if it doesn’t work.”

With those encouraging words ringing in our ears, we packed our belongings and moved to Colorado.

Missionary support income, no kids, living in a borrowed walk out basement.

Yet, it was exciting ministry time—we would just walk up to people, tell them about Jesus and invite them to Alpha. We were serving as church planters from the Episcopal

Diocese of Pittsburgh into the Episcopal Diocese of Colorado—with that bishop's permission.

3 months in, life completely changed.

We found out I was pregnant. $1+1=3$

And then then Episcopal Church and the Anglican church separated and we chose the Anglican world. That caused us to lose half our funding and the support of the Colorado Episcopal bishop.

Now $\frac{1}{2}$ missionary salary income, 1 kid....lots of questions....

Do we stay or do we go?

How do we stay?

Will I live in a basement with a new baby?

How will we afford to rent?

YET....

How can we walk away from people who have never heard of Jesus and are asking questions about him?

What is the right and wise decision?

And how do we tithe when we don't even have enough for ourselves?

Since we gave Jesus our lives and our work, maybe we don't need to give him our money?

Blame it on the pregnancy hormones—but I was questioning and Greg was standing strong.

He said: God gives us 100% and only asks for 10% when he could ask for everything. We are tithing.

And so we tithed

And donations came in

The church grew little by little

We moved out of the basement 1 month before the baby came.

We stayed in Colorado planting and establishing Community at the Well church for 8 years.

During that time, 2 more babies came.

Many more people came to life-saving faith in Jesus. They were spiritual babies.

This included 3 women who came out of the Mormon faith.

We were investing in eternity through our giving on earth.

There were other times of questioning, especially when we only made \$1000 per month.

Ye....We have always known that when we give God everything, including 10% of our money, He supplies all our needs.

Many of you know the story of the school that I was called to start and run. Again, we are living on **1 income, lots of faith....and still tithing**

I finish with the words of Polycarp, the Bishop of Smyrna in the 2nd century. He was discipled by the apostle John and stood as a Daniel in his world. At age 86 Polycarp was arrested and brought before the ProConsul in Rome. The ProConsul said, “Curse Christ and I will release you. Or you will be burned at the stake.”

Polycarp replied-- Eighty-six years I have served Him. He had never done me wrong. How then can I blaspheme my King who has saved me?

Daniel, Polycarp, and many unknown saints through the ages stand as witnesses to the generosity and love of God. A love that is 100% for you.

I encourage you to make this the year you give God back the 100% that he has given you. Invite him into all the corners and rooms of your soul.

Hold nothing back—

and let him surprise you with his generosity and his love!