



Grand Blanc UMC

What I've Learned About What Really Matters

By: Pastor Brian West

trying to make decisions, both big and small. When we buy a car, we ask the question: what matters most? The airbag quality and placement, or the build of the vehicle, itself? Or, maybe we're more concerned about whether or not it's visually appealing. Ultimately, it's up to each one of us to determine what matters most. And so, the advice I received was, "there are two moral documents in our lives: our calendars and our budgets."

A while ago, I received a wise word of council with regard to the question, "what matters most?". It's a question that I suspect most of us ask throughout life, often when

At first, this seemed a bit strange, but the more I reflected on it, the more I began to understand just how true it was. If we were to each take a look at our calendars, couldn't we probably determine what events matter most to us, at least for a particular period of time? If yours is full of doctors appointments, you could probably conclude that your health is what really matters to you. Or maybe, you look at your calendar, and 75% of it is family events, gatherings, dinners, etc., you could fairly determine that family is what matters most to you. And there's nothing necessarily wrong with these examples, just as with so many other.

And the same could be said of our budgets. If my budget reflects 25% of my spending should go toward Taco Bell (I'm not naming any names, but check out last week's article), and only 10% toward rent, it becomes blatantly obvious what really matters to me.

And so, we have these documents that help us determine what really matters to us. Upon review, we might be pleased with what we discover. Or, perhaps, we might look closely and discover that, where we're spending the most time and resources, doesn't really reflect what is *truly* most important to us (while I love Taco Bell, it is not the most important thing to me – not by a long shot!).

You probably see where this is going by now, right? You've heard it before, haven't you; "first fruits" and all of that? These things are true, but one part of the conversation around financial giving and tithing to the church that is so often left out is that it is a "**spiritual discipline.**" Let's think about it this way: just as reading scripture, praying, worship, and all of the other things that we're likely familiar with are spiritual disciplines (actions that increase our connection with and understanding of God's love), so too is financially giving. And I promise I'm not making this up! When we give to the church so that the church can then expend those resources for the sake of meaningful and Christ-centered ministry, we end up becoming more connected with and aware of God's love and grace. And it's not that we're buying it! Rather, we're *practicing* it! We are *actively* practicing love, selflessness, hospitality, and so many other good and Godly things!

So, what are you to do with this grand proclamation from your pastor? Here is what I'm inviting you to do: take a look at your budget – written or in your head – and ask yourself, based on this, what really matters to me? Now name it. Don't be afraid of it, no matter what it is. Then, ask yourself, where does the spiritual discipline of giving fit in?

Whatever your answer to these questions, I want to encourage you to pray about them. Maybe it's never been a priority in your budgeting practices. Could this be the year that you take a leap of faith? Maybe the launching pad is a starting point of 2% of your income. That leaves room to grow, right! Now, bend at the knees, keep your head up, and then... JUMP!

On Sunday, November 22, we're going to collect your pledges whether you bring your pledge card with you in person, send it in, or complete it online. However you do it, you're making a commitment to you and to God that is all about how you want to grow in your spiritual discipline of giving. It's about making a decision that this is how you want to draw closer in your awareness of God's immense love and God's powerful grace extended through the church!

Believing in us,
Pastor Brian