



# TITHING

*the basics of giving*





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We hope this brief summary on tithing is informative and encouraging to you. Please check with your local church for their specific guidelines on membership and tithing (Hebrews 13:17).

## **ABC'S OF TITHING:**

### **WHAT IS TITHING?**

The word tithing is derived from the word tenth. It stretches all the way back to the Old Testament (OT) when God's people were to tithe; meaning to give a tenth of their living to God (that is, the first 10 percent; or their first-fruits as it says in Proverbs 3:9).

Tithing is first hinted at in Genesis 14 with Abraham's encounter with Melchizedek, but it is formally discussed in Leviticus, which is important because Leviticus is the book where God shows His people how to live holy lives. Part of this holy living was honoring God with a tenth of all one's income and possessions, because "Every tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the trees, is the Lord's; it is holy to the Lord" (Leviticus 27:30). Early in Scripture we read that the tithe is not ours; it is God's, and we are just giving back what is His in the first place.

## **THE FOUNDATION OF THE TITHE IS THAT IT IS ALREADY GOD'S**

### **WHAT TITHING IS NOT:**

Tithing is not a means to earn salvation; only faith in Jesus Christ can offer that (John 3:16, Galatians 2:16, Ephesians 2:8). Tithing is no longer a legal requirement from God as it was in the OT. Now, it is given out of gratitude, faithfulness, joy, and worship, not out of legal requirement from God's Law (Galatians 5:1, Romans 7:6). So what's the role of tithing in the New Testament (NT)?

## **THE ROLE OF TITHING IN THE NEW TESTAMENT:**

There is no formal discourse about tithing in the NT. Given that, it could be said that tithing is no longer the benchmark but rather the baseline for God's people to live holy lives in regards to finances. It is not what Christians have to do, but what they are called to do. What was shadowed by the Law in the OT is shown in the light of grace in the NT (Hebrews 10:1). In love and the knowledge of grace, tithing is the starting point for determining how to seek God's Kingdom first (Matthew 6:33). In the area of finances, Jesus affirmed the tithe but rebuked those who tithed out of simple ritual while neglecting things like justice and faithfulness (Matthew 23:23).

The NT speaks more about giving, also called offering. This is where Christians determine in their own hearts (2 Corinthians 9:7), through faith, prayer, and discernment, an amount of their resources to regularly and sacrificially (2 Corinthians 8:1-5) give to God and to the work of the Gospel.

## **GOD FULLY EXPECTS HIS PEOPLE TO CONTINUE TO HONOR HIM WITH THEIR FINANCES AS THEY GIVE TO THE WORK OF THE GOSPEL WITH GLAD AND SINCERE HEARTS.**

Often, in common language, the term tithing has become almost synonymous with giving or offering, but the act is still the same – Christians in faith and in joy, set aside their first fruits to give to God. Some Christians will call what they give to God their “tithe” and what they give to charity their “giving.”

## **FOUR TRUTHS ABOUT TITHING:**

### **TITHING IS BIBLICAL:**

As we’ve already discovered tithing is rooted in the OT, but the legal requirement of tithing has been removed in the New Testament.

### **TITHING IS BASIC:**

Tithing is foundational to the Christian life. God calls us to be holy in every corner of our lives (1 Thessalonians 5:23); and tithing is the first step to being holy and faithful with our salary and income. Tithing is how Christians put God first in their faithful stewardship of finances.

### **TITHING IS BELIEF:**

Tithing is to believe God knows best, to trust Him with our resources. Malachi 3:10 says, “Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts. If I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.” We find here that tithing is an act whereby Christians believe, by God’s promise, that He will use the tithe for His holy and good purposes, blessing us in the process. God even tells the Israelites to test Him! By saying that, we can see that God acts on our faithfulness.

### **TITHING IS A BLESSING:**

As we discover by reading OT customs of tithing from Deuteronomy 14:22-28, tithes are used both as a blessing to the giver and as a blessing to others. Tithes are meant to be a joyful and sacrificial expression of faith in God (Deuteronomy 12:6-7). Ancient, pre-temple Israelites were, at times, even allowed to use their tithes for the blessings of personal and family enjoyment (Deuteronomy 14:24-26)! In this, we see that God blesses the faithfulness of His people. Tithing is a joy for Christians as they see how God blesses those who give.

### **WHERE IS THE TITHE TO BE COLLECTED/GIVEN?**

This is an important question. In instances of tithing in both the OT and NT, those resources were given and collected at the community place of worship: In the OT it was in the temple (Nehemiah 12:24); in the NT we see a new pattern emerging where it was collected by the churches (1 Corinthians 16:1-2, 2 Corinthians 8:1-4).

The church is to be loved, because Jesus loves the church (Ephesians 5:25). So, when Christians give of their tithes and offerings first to the Lord, they are to give them through the local church.

**THE CHURCH IS THE BODY OF CHRIST, OF WHICH JESUS IS THE HEAD (EPHESIANS 5:23, COLOSSIANS 1:24, 1 CORINTHIANS 12:27). JESUS IDENTIFIES HIMSELF WITH THE CHURCH (ACTS 9:4).**

## **WHAT HAPPENS TO THE TITHE?**

Tithing can be a hard step of faith for some people because of the mentality that they are not “in charge” of what happens to their resources. Thus, they choose to give elsewhere. When Christians opt not to give to the church, but rather to “tithe” to their chosen charity, they can feel good for the wrong reason. For example, they know where their money is going (they get to be in control); they feel good about furthering a cause (they get the glory); and they find identity in helping (they get the reward). All these things happen in the absence of faith. When Christians give to charity it is a wonderful thing, but it ought not to come at the expense of giving to the Lord through the church, as we see demonstrated in Scripture.

Throughout the NT, before anything else, Christians had a priority of supporting their fellow believers and giving to the cause of the church, which is to spread the Gospel.

## **TODAY, AS IN NT TIMES, THE LOCAL CHURCH IS THE PRIMARY WAY IN WHICH GOD CALLS HIS PEOPLE TO ADVANCE HIS KINGDOM.**

Because God places primacy within the local community of worshipers, giving to God via the local church should be the priority of Christians.

Paul says in Galatians 6:10, “So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.”

What he means is, how good of a testimony is it to take care of others, but not our own? Should a man support orphans, but not his own children? Likewise, how can Christians financially support other organizations, but not the local church? Now, God is honored when money is given in addition to Him and His church to help a hurting world (Luke 12:32-34). In doing so, it is a great testimony to the generosity of God’s people.

Still, people want to know what happens to their money. This is an honest and fair question, one that the church honors by disclosing the budget details in an effort to demonstrate good stewardship of finances and resources (2 Corinthians 8:21).

## **WHAT IS THE TITHE USED FOR?**

In today’s churches, tithes and offerings are foundationally and fundamentally used for the same things they were used for in the Bible.

### **TO DO MINISTRY:**

(provide for the poor, kingdom work, missionary efforts, etc.)

Today, this plays out in the form of ministries such as programming budgets, missionaries and mission work, Bibles and other materials, discipleship, facility costs, to provide for those in need, worship services, the building and raising up of new leaders, and more. (Deuteronomy 14:28, 26:12).

## **TO PROVIDE SALARY:**

(in the OT, for the workers of the Temple, and in the NT, for the laborers of the churches)

In the OT the Levites and priests made a living from the tithes (Numbers 18:21, Leviticus 7:1-7). Likewise in the NT, the idea that church workers should make a wage from God's churches is openly and firmly taught. 1 Corinthians 9:14 says, "... the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel" (Luke 10:7, 1 Corinthians 9:12-15, Philippians 4:18, 1 Timothy 5:17-18).

## **FAQ'S OF TITHING:**

### **IF GOD DOESN'T NEED OUR MONEY, WHY DO CHURCHES MAKE SUCH A BIG DEAL ABOUT TITHING?**

In the Bible, no one talks more about money than Jesus. Jesus does this because he knows people have a tendency to fall into the trap of loving money. So, churches teach on money simply because Jesus does and the rest of the Bible does. Finances are a matter of faith, wisdom, and obedience (Hebrews 13:5, 1 Timothy 6:10).

### **IF I'M OUT OF A JOB, AM I REQUIRED TO TITHE?**

While the legal requirements of OT Laws (such as tithing) have been fulfilled in the life and sacrifice of Jesus, Paul says in 2 Corinthians 8:12, "if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have." Meaning, God knows our situation and our hearts and wants us to be obedient to Him whether rich or poor. Jesus commended a poor woman who

gave her last penny as a sacrificial act, which meant more than those who gave out of wealth (Mark 12:43-44). Tithing is always a great demonstration and exercise of faith – even more so in the hardest of times.

### **WHAT IF I CAN'T AFFORD TO TITHE 10% RIGHT NOW?**

The problem with this question is that the tithe is viewed in a non-biblical way. Tithing is not something people "afford" as if it's a bill to be paid. If giving to God the first 10% is a financial issue/concern, then the real question is, "How can I prioritize my life in order to be able to be faithful to God with my finances?" If possible, seeking financial guidance is always a wise move.

### **WHAT IF I CAN TITHE ABOVE AND BEYOND 10%?**

2 Corinthians 9:11 says, "You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way ..." As stated earlier, tithing/offering in the NT has no set amount, but the standard from the OT shows us that 10% of our gross income is a wonderful baseline from which to begin. It is the one which God first established, but it is by no means a cap.

### **HOW OFTEN SHOULD I TITHE?**

There is no requirement of how often people are to tithe. The pattern we learn from the Bible is simply to tithe regularly as an act of faithfulness and form of worship (1 Corinthians 16:2).

### **CAN I TITHE SOMETHING INSTEAD OF MONEY, SUCH AS MY TIME?**

Often, people will exchange tithing financially with something like the "tithing" of their time, such as

through volunteer work. There are many reasons for this question, but the bottom line is this: That is not the nature of the tithe. When God speaks of tithing in Scripture it is through finances and goods. God's people should always be giving their time to spreading the Gospel – but not as a replacement for biblical tithing.

**IS IT A SIN NOT TO TITHE?**

Christianity is about holy living through the Holy Spirit, not about following rules (Romans 7:6, 2 Corinthians 3:6). Tithing should come from a holy fear of God, not an unhealthy fear of sin. Through faith, it should come from a heart of worship and gratitude spilling over into a love of the local church, the gospel, and a passion to see God's Kingdom expand

**REMEMBER: TITHING SHOULD BE A JOY, NOT A JOB.**

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# MONEY

T H E R E   A R E   O N L Y   T W O   O P T I O N S

**YOU WORSHIP IT**  
*(ACKNOWLEDGING IT OWNS YOU)*

**OR**

**YOU STEWARD IT**  
*(ACKNOWLEDGING IT BELONGS TO GOD)*

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*THE POINT IS THIS: WHOEVER SOWS SPARINGLY WILL ALSO REAP SPARINGLY, AND WHOEVER SOWS BOUNTIFULLY WILL ALSO REAP BOUNTIFULLY. EACH ONE MUST GIVE AS HE HAS DECIDED IN HIS HEART, NOT RELUCTANTLY OR UNDER COMPULSION, FOR GOD LOVES A CHEERFUL GIVER.*

— 2 CORINTHIANS 9:6-7 —