

- **God uses giving to conform me to the image of Christ.** Philippians 2 says, “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus, who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.” Giving practices the attitude and nature of Christ, and makes us more like Jesus. It is a key tool in growing our faith and creating the fruit of righteousness in our lives.

How should I begin to tithe?

Scriptures help us know how to approach giving. There are three basic principles:

#1—Give in proportion – give as a percentage of what you earn. Some ask whether to tithe off of the gross or the net of their pay. It really depends on what you want to be blessed on... do we want God’s full measure of blessing? 2 Corinthians 9:6 says, “Remember this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.”

#2—Give first – make it be the first check you write after payday. Don’t give God the leftovers, offer Him your best. Exodus 23:19 says, “Bring the best of the firstfruits of your soil to the house of the Lord your God.”

#3—Give with joy – approach giving with the spirit of joy, as you participate in the work of God. 2 Corinthians 9:7 says, “Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”

Does it make sense to tithe if you’re buried in debt?

Your situation didn’t happen overnight, and most likely it won’t get resolved overnight. The best advice I can offer is that begin with what you can do, and continue to grow your amount as you are able. It is amazing how many times I’ve seen people blessed when they start to structure their finances according to God’s design. The key questions are heart ones – Is the Lordship issue right? Is God my first priority? Am I growing in my fruitfulness toward God? God honors those whose hearts are right with Him.

What if I have an unsaved spouse?

In most cases, an unsaved spouse isn’t going to understand why you want to give 10% of your income to the Lord. For that reason, my advice is to go slow. Generally speaking, husbands and wives should be in agreement when making major financial decisions. If you are married to an unsaved spouse, stewardship is secondary to salvation, and the church should be praying with you over that concern. Be wise. Ask God to open the door to speak about the finances. You might be surprised. Some have come to salvation by trying a

faith experiment of tithing on finances for a period of months. In any case, allow the Spirit of God to grow both you and your spouse toward that result.

What if I’m giving of my time to serve in ministry?

Serving in ministry is significant, and is certainly a part of our giving. However, the Bible teaches to give of my time, my talent, and my treasures. Tithing is separate of our time, and both are important for the Kingdom.

Where should we give our tithe?

The answer is simply to the Lord’s work. Most of the time, this means investing in the local church that you attend. A helpful guideline is to give 10% of your income to the general fund of the local church, and any giving over and above that toward the church’s capital stewardship efforts or to other ministries. Churches should also tithe from their income, using that amount to support other missions or ministries beyond their walls. God honors the tithe of a church body just as he does each individual.

Should children and teenagers tithe?

Absolutely! From allowance to income, parents should encourage tithing to young people early, and establish strong financial stewardship principles in their kids at a young age. It builds them up to be better stewards and appreciate what they also can contribute to the Kingdom.



The Truth about Tithing



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Tithing

One of the most unwelcome subjects in a church is the discussion of money. In fact, I know many pastors who avoid teaching about financial stewardship because it ruffles too many feathers. In my opinion, that is tragic. It's like knowing the best stock tip of the day and not telling your friends where they can make the wisest investment. According to Scriptures, giving is a great privilege that brings incredible dividends.

Jesus declares, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." (John 10:10) God wants us to live an abundant life. God wants to bless us abundantly. It's His nature to give grace, and He fully intended for us to experience the fullest life possible. And when we align our lives to His will, it always leads to the best possible result. This includes putting into practice the Biblical principles of financial stewardship. We should never consider investing in God's work as having something taken away from us. It's just the opposite. According to Scripture, giving to the Lord is the key to experiencing the best possible joy we could ever receive.

Malachi shared God's prophecy, saying, "Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. But you ask, 'How do we rob you?' 'In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse-the whole nation of you-because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse. Test me in this,' says the Lord, 'and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have enough room for it.'" (Malachi 3:8-10) In this passage, God accuses the Jews of robbing Him. The Jews weren't tithing and this resulted in not receiving from God a full measure of His blessing.

What is tithing?

To properly understand the principle of giving, we need to know what a tithe is. A tithe is one-tenth. It is investing one-tenth of your resources into the Lord's work out of gratitude for all that He has given you. Literally, God gives us 100% of what we receive, and we give Him back 10% in thanksgiving.

Does tithing apply to Christians?

Some have tried to argue that tithing is strictly an Old Testament regulation and, because we're no longer under the Jewish law, they argue that tithing no longer applies to Christians. But that doesn't match with the Bible.

Three reasons why we should tithe:

First, tithing is evident even before Jewish law was given, and transcends the Jewish law as a universal practice. Tithing did not originate with Moses on Mount Sinai. It was practiced before the Jewish law was given back in Genesis 14 when Abraham gave a tenth of the battle revenues to the king of Salem, a priest of the Most High God. Abraham tithed.

Second, Jesus included tithing in his teaching, and promoted it. In Matthew 23:23, Jesus blasts the legalistic Jewish leaders. "Woe to you teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices-mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law-justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former." If Jesus wanted to end tithing, he could have done so right there. But he doesn't. He expects that we give in both behavior and money.

Third, tithing parallels the New Testament practice of giving. In Luke 6:38, Jesus says "Give and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For the measure you use, it will be measured to you." Jesus mirrors the same concept of Malachi 3:10, that God wants to open the floodgates of his blessing on us. Giving is the engine of blessing.

If there is any change between the Old Testament and the New Testament, it is in the amount we are called to give. The Old Testament had three forms of giving – the tithe, the offering, and the sacrifice. These gifts would be approximately 20-30% of a person's income. But Jesus gave a different amount. He tells us to get off the legalistic measure, and offer 100% of our lives to God. In fact, the one person Jesus honored in their giving was an older woman who gave her last 2 coins. God is moved by the giver's heart.

Romans 12:1 says, "Therefore, I urge you brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship." In other words, give it all to God. Everything we have is God's, and he wants us to offer it back to him. This includes our calendar, our skills, and our money. It's an issue of Lordship. What owns my time, talent and treasure owns me. When God owns me, giving is not a problem.

Why should we tithe?

There are many reasons to give to God. Here are just a few:

- **I can't out-give God.** The only time God allows us to test him is in the area of giving. God always gives us far more than we can return. It becomes an issue of trust, and whether we really believe God is true to His word.
- **God's timing is always better than mine.** Giving breeds contentment. It helps us re-examine our priorities, maintain a better budget, and wait on things that may be better received later. God wants to meet our needs, and meet the needs of others through us. His timing is always better than mine.
- **God grows our eternal bank account.** Investments in this world are limited. Their value is worth nothing to us after our death, and it all returns to dust. But giving for the Kingdom is the most valuable investment of all – it lasts for eternity. Many of us attempt to save up and help our children have a better future. Giving helps not only our children, but many others have a better eternal future, as we invest in their opportunity to know Jesus Christ. And best of all, God can do more with my 90% remaining than I can do with the 100% myself. He knows how to use our giving to create a much better return in this life as well.