

What the Bible Says About Tithing and Giving

Few financial issues cause as much controversy and discussion among Christians today as the issue of tithing, which is giving 10 percent of one's income back to God. A quick review of the Bible reveals many Old Testament references to tithing but few New Testament references.

The giving of a tenth to honor God first appears in Genesis 14:20. Abraham, in apparent recognition of God's help in defeating his enemies and capturing their material possessions, gives a tenth of the wealth to the priest Melchizedek. Abraham realized that God was the source of his ability to be victorious in battle and wanted to give back to God a portion of what God had allowed him to acquire.

In Genesis 28:22, Jacob vows to give a tenth to God of all that God had given him. A way to honor God as provider of material gain was to tithe or give from the "first fruits" of one's harvest, as Abel did in Genesis 4.

When God instituted the law through Moses several centuries after Abraham, the tithe on income became a commandment. In fact, a strong case can be made for as many as three tithes (Deuteronomy 14:22-29; Numbers 18:21-26).

Whether one tithe or three, God took tithing very seriously. In Malachi 3:8-12, God tells Israel that the nation is robbing him by not bringing the whole tithe into God's house. The result of this disobedience was economic disaster for Israel. Proverbs 3:9-10 says:

"Honor the Lord with your substance and with the first fruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will be bursting with wine."

The New Testament is somewhat vague on the subject of tithing. Jesus mentions tithing only once in Matthew 23:23. In this reference, he challenges the religious leaders of his day about the depth of their devotion to God:

"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."

Jesus' final word of rebuke is that they should have tithed as well as practiced justice, mercy and faithfulness.

Paul writes in Galatians 3:24-25 that we are no longer under the law, for the law was merely there as a tutor to lead us to Christ. He writes in Galatians 5:18 that it is the Spirit, not the law that should be our guide.

God expects Spirit-led giving from a totally surrendered follower (Romans 12:1). Except for the portion that is to be kept to provide for oneself, one's family and needy relatives, the rest should be dispersed to God's work. Whether that is 10 percent or 90 percent of one's income is irrelevant. Tithing can become a starting point for a believer but should yield to Spirit-directed guidance as the believer matures.

There is another, often overlooked, reason for giving that is very important. The reality is that there is an eternal feud between God and money; Jesus spoke of it in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:24) when he said:

"No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."

Jesus also said in Matthew 6:19-21:

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

It is a fact that the act of giving money away is probably the most effective way to be sure we control money rather than allowing it to control us. The act of generous giving, and the joy and blessing that accompany it, leads to freedom from anxiety and worry about money, which in turn leads to contentment.

Tithing and Giving at Cherry Hills Community Church

At Cherry Hills, we believe that Christians are called by a biblical mandate to give a tithe, which means to return ten percent of our income to God. Each of us should prayerfully make the choice of where to give our tithe.

Some may choose to give it exclusively to the church, while others may split it between the church and other Christian ministries. Within the church, your tithe may be directed toward general ministry operations, special needs or building projects—all according to the how you believe God is prompting you.

Offerings are a free choice to give above and beyond the tithe. When we consider how God has provided for us, we may choose to give more generously as an expression of gratitude and worship.

If you have questions about giving opportunities at Cherry Hills or your personal donation record, please call the church office at 303-791-4100 or send an email to records@chcc.org.

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