

YOU ASKED FOR IT – PS STEVE GREEN
WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT GIVING?

I am going to tackle an incredibly polarizing and controversial topic of money and in particular the biblical basis for tithing and giving to the church!

You may have heard all manner of things spoken about money and giving and tithing in church but I want to avoid opinion and tradition and answer the question today of what does the Bible actually say about giving?

And the reality is that the bible actually has a lot to say about money! It mentions money over 800 times! Jesus parables mentioned money over 50% of the time. Money is a big deal and a big issue, it plays a huge role, it is mentioned a lot in the bible and so what does it actually say and more than that what does the mean for us today?

We are going to go to a few places today:

- 1 – OT TITHING
- 2 – NT GIVING
- 3 – ITS PURPOSE IN OUR OWN LIVES

OLD TESTAMENT TITHING

Let's establish first off without going into massive amounts of detail about it that the practice of tithing was a part of the civil Law set up by Moses for God's people.

The word tithe simply means 10% or one tenth. This meant (in a nutshell) giving the first 10% of what you earned or produced and giving it to God. Namely the temple, to the work of the priests and the functioning of the house of God.

Leviticus 27:30 (NIV) "A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord; it is holy to the Lord.

2 Chronicles 31:4-5 (NIV)⁴ He ordered the people living in Jerusalem to give the portion due the priests and Levites so they could devote themselves to the Law of the Lord. ⁵As soon as the order went out, the Israelites generously gave the firstfruits of their grain, new wine, olive oil and honey and all that the fields produced. They brought a great amount, a tithe of everything.

Deuteronomy 14:22 (NIV) Be sure to set aside a tenth of all that your fields produce each year.

This applied to every person. As someone subject to the Law of Moses this was a part of what you had to adhere to and was a standard part of your life. The tithes were taken at different times, there were also some other extra tithes and of course many different offerings that the people were expected to give in.

So, there is obviously a lot more detail we could go into on that but for the sake of time lets understand that this was a long-established law that people we under and that they practiced. It was even a practice that was still in place when Jesus shows up.

NEW TESTAMENT TITHING / FIRSTFRUITS

So, THAT'S ALL GOOD AND WELL I HEAR YOU SAY... BUT STEVE WE ARE NOT OLD TESTAMENT JEWS WE ARE NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIANS AND WE ARE NO LONGER UNDER THE LAW. Didn't Jesus come and fulfil the law and so we are no longer under the law but under grace? So, doesn't that mean that we are no longer obligated to tithe under the law?

That my friend is TRUE... You are no longer under the Old Testament law of tithing... However, you also need to understand something: The tithe was a principle before the Law and was practiced before the Law was even given.

Both Abraham and Jacob practiced the tithe:

Genesis 14:18-20 (NIV) ¹⁸ Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, ¹⁹ and he blessed Abram, saying, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. ²⁰ And praise be to God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand." Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.

Malchizedek is what is referred to as a type of Christ who shows up in the OT, a foreshadowing of Christ who was to come and Abraham pays him a tithe on everything he gets.

Genesis 28:20-22(NIV) ²⁰ Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear ²¹ so that I return safely to my father's household, then the Lord^{al} will be my God²² and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth."

So we can see that the whole idea of bringing a tithe was not just locked up in some civil law but it was before the law, affirmed in the law and was in fact a part of a much boarder principle which I believe is the principle of:

FIRSTFRUITS

Throughout the scriptures we see that the first always belonged to God:

- The first of your produce
- The first of your animals
- The first of your children

Jesus highlights this when he says in the New Testament: Matthew 6:33 (NIV) *But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*

Why the first? I believe that what you honour first is what you come under!

1. First determines Lordship: Proverbs 3:9 (NIV) *Honour the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops;*
2. First recognizes God as provider: Deuteronomy 8:17-18 (NIV) ¹⁷ *You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." ¹⁸ But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to*

produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today.

3. First is God's: Exodus 13:1-2 (NIV) *The Lord said to Moses, "Consecrate to me every firstborn male. The first offspring of every womb among the Israelites belongs to me, whether human or animal."*

Acts 20 – The believers met on the 1st day to break bread. Throughout the Old and New Testament, we can see that the first belongs to God.

So, although we aren't under a Law to tithe, we see this as a part of a much bigger principle of bringing our first and best to God, seeking Him first in all things, honoring Him first. In fact, from my study of this topic there would be many biblical scholars who would advocate that tithing is a completely valid and applicable practice for Christians today

NEW TESTAMENT GIVING

Let's take a step away from the tithing area now and let's simply look at what the bible says in the New Testament about giving for New Testament Jesus following believers... As we do this we will see that the New Testament actually says very little at all about tithing.

However as one Theologian points out: *"Giving financially to the church of God is thoroughly embedded in the New Testament"*. The idea and practice that we as followers of God bring a portion of what we have and regularly give it back to God HAS NOT CHANGED!

I have spoken to many people before on this issue and especially on the tithing thing. People have different opinions and often strong ones. And I'll be honest we can debate and argue the tithe for new testament Christians. But you show me where in the bible is says that as a Christian you come and bring nothing.

1 Corinthians 16:2 (NIV) *On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.*

1 Corinthians 9:11 & 14 (NIV) ¹¹ *If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you?* ¹⁴ *In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.*

2 Corinthians 9:7 (NIV) *Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*

What does the bible actually say about giving? The bible, as we have seen is absolutely clear that whether it is a tithe, more, whatever it is we are all called to give a portion of what we earn and give it back to God for the work of his church.

The question then becomes not "DO I HAVE TO GIVE" or "SHOULD I GIVE?" we have seen that the OT establishes it, the NT affirms it, God's principles underline it, the question is not SHOULD I GIVE, THE QUESTION IS SIMPLY WHAT WILL I GIVE?

I believe that personally there is valid biblical evidence and basis for you and I to tithe 10% of what we earn... not as a law, but as a base level of honoring God, putting him first. It is a great starting point. I kind of have the view that if the law demanded 10% then now that I'm under Grace why would grace ask me for any less when in EVERY WAY Jesus LIFTED THE LEVEL ON THE LAW!

Becs and I have always done our best to honour God and to give the first 10% of everything we have earned and given it back to God and sown it into the local church. Ever since we first got married this has been a non-negotiable in our budget. We tithe on our gross income and then we also give in offerings and sponsor children and special causes, etc. above that.

So why is giving so important to a person of faith:

1) Giving affirms God's Lordship

When we come and we give of our money we are I believe making a powerful worship statement and we are affirming that God holds the throne of our lives and not money.

2) Giving unlocks God's Gods provision

Luke 6:38 New International Version (NIV)

³⁸ 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 with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

Malachi 3:10 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁰ Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.

3) Giving plants your heart

Matthew 6:21 (NIV) For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

When you give of your treasure into the things of God, don't be surprised when your heart actually follows and you into a greater love for and desire to see Gods kingdom expand and established here on earth.

I want to challenge you today, if you have never given before or maybe you are not regularly giving to being that journey, to start! You can ask anyone, anyone who has tithed or given regularly over a period of time then they will tell you all about God's miraculous and amazing provision when you do.

I believe that if we can follow our biblical mandate to be a generous and giving people in every way, that we will see the dreams we hold as a church and the plans we have become a reality, we will see the kingdom expand, lives changed, influence grow and salvation come to many in our community