

WHY I TITHE

Why do people tithe to the church? The reasons are many. As I considered my own motivation, I discovered several reasons why I give ten percent of my income to the church. A study of these reasons will help us to understand the great blessing of tithing and the biblical responsibility to tithe.

1. To Honor the Creator.

"Render... unto God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21).

Acquisitiveness is one of the basic drives of mankind. Children grasp their toys and cry, "Mine!" Someone has noted three attitudes in the parable of the good Samaritan. The priest and the Levite had the attitude, "What's mine is mine and I'm going to keep it!" The thieves had the attitude "What's yours is mine, and I'm going to get it!" The Samaritan had the attitude, "What's mine is yours, and you can have it." There is another attitude that should permeate our thinking, even above the commendable attitude of the Samaritan. That is, "Everything we have belongs to God, and we are stewards of His goods"

God owns the entire world and its substance. "The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof" (Psalm 24:1). "Behold, all souls are mine" (Ezekiel 18:4). "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine" (Haggai 2:8). It is God who gives people the power to obtain wealth (Psalm 75:6-7; Ecclesiastes 5:19). We are not to glory in what God has given us, but to glory in Him (Jeremiah 9:23-24).

Why should I begrudge God ten percent when everything actually belongs to Him? If it were not for Him, there would be no land, no seed, no strength, no income, and no life. How generous He is to tell us, "'he tithe... is the LORD'S"! (Leviticus 27:30).

2. To Acknowledge My Heritage.

"And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:29).

Abraham was the first tithe payer of record (Genesis 14:20). Abraham's grandson, Jacob, paid tithes (Genesis 28:22). Scripture says that Levi, Abraham's descendant and the father of the tribe from which the priesthood came, paid tithes in Abraham (Hebrews 7:9). My heritage of paying a tithe precedes the law of Moses. As a child of Abraham and an heir of the promise of Abraham, I acknowledge my family relationship by paying tithes.

Jesus said to the Jews, "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham" (John 8:39). It would be strange to claim to be a child of Abraham and yet to neglect one of Abraham's most fundamental and noteworthy acts. I pay my tithes as a spiritual descendant of Abraham, the father of the faithful.

3. To Fulfill the Covenant.

"For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious" (II Corinthians 3:11).

In every comparison of the law of Moses and the new covenant that came by Jesus Christ, the new covenant stands supreme. The characteristic word in the Book of Hebrews is

better, and everything is better about the new covenant. If the law demanded tithes, then how much more should we who are under the "perfect law of liberty" give our tithes willingly. (See James 1:25). If the law is written in the fleshly tables of our hearts and we follow God's commands not from outward rules but because of our new nature, then how quickly and how easily we should give the tenth that belongs to the Lord" (See II Corinthians 3:3-6).

Some people say, "Oh, we do not pay tithes, because tithing was under the law." If that is a sufficient reason for not paying tithes, then we could also mistreat our parents, for the law said, Honour thy father and thy mother" (Exodus 20:12). In actuality, we honor our father and mother and we give our tithes because the principles of the law are written in our hearts by the Spirit of God. We give willingly and liberally because the Spirit motivates us to give what God has said is His.

4. To Show My Love.

"Many waters cannot quench love" (Song of Solomon 8:7).

Love is the strongest motivation in the world. I have seen bumper stickers that say, "If you love Jesus, honk you horn!" Anyone can honk his horn. But David said, "Neither will I offer...unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing" (II Samuel 24:24). Someone should print a sticker that says, "If you love Jesus, pay your tithes!"

For someone who genuinely loves the Lord, the tithe is only the beginning of his giving. He gives not only his tithe, but also offerings (plural), not grudgingly and not of necessity, but cheerfully with love.

5. To Fulfill an Obligation.

"Ye pay tithe...:these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone" (Matthew 23:23). Jesus did not criticize the Pharisees for paying tithes. He commended them. He said it was something they "ought" to have done. The word ought expresses an obligation or duty. It is one of the strongest words in the English language. To pay tithes is something every Christian ought to do.

The word ought has three meanings: (a) obligation or duty; as in, "He ought to pay his debts", (b) desirability; as in, "You ought to eat more slowly", (c) expectancy or probability; as in, "I ought to be through by Monday." Each one of these meanings puts an obligation upon the Christian. It is desirable for him to pay his tithes, he is expected to pay his tithes, and he has a duty to pay his tithes.

6. To Escape Condemnation.

"Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me... in tithes and offerings" (Malachi 3:8).

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators,... nor thieves, ... shall inherit the kingdom of God.
_____ How sad it is that people who are honest in business and who pay their debts to the bank, the store, and the government will not pay God what belongs to Him! Sometimes people quibble about whether they are "paying" or "giving" tithes, but both terms seem appropriate. The tithe is the Lord's and He expects us to pay it to Him; at the same time, He does not receive it until we give it to Him. He does not give us the authority to use His tithes for other purposes, but we have the power to spend it as long as it is in our hands. Nevertheless, a person is condemned if he spends God's money.

7. To Spread the Gospel.

"So hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel" (I Corinthians 9:14).

God has ordained for people to be saved by the preaching of the gospel (I Corinthians 1:21). "How shall they hear without a preacher?" (Romans 10:14).

Tithing is God's way of supporting the ministry. In the Old Testament, the Levites and the priest were God's minister to the nation of Israel, and they were supported by tithes. In the New Testament, God has called people to minister the gospel. These ministers can be more effective if they do not have to provide for their livelihood by working on a secular job but can devote themselves full time to the work of God. They need time to give themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the Word.

It is not wrong for a man to labor with his hands, nor should a minister feel too good to engage in honest labor. Yet God's plan is for those who preach the gospel to live of the gospel. When God inspired Moses to write that the people should not put a muzzle on the ox that labored, God was not as concerned with the ox as He was with the principle that a laborer should receive his livelihood from his work. The application of this principle is that the minister of the gospel should earn his living from his ministry. (See I Corinthians 9:9-14).

Some ministers have endured financial hardships and deprivation in order to proclaim the gospel in needy areas. If the tithing income insures that the minister can live in a good house, drive a good car, and buy sufficient clothes for his family, why should I begrudge providing these things to a man who would preach the gospel even if he had to work on a secular job to do it? It is a disgrace to a church if the pastor has to take a secular job to supply his family's needs when there should be sufficient tithing income available to allow him to do God's work on a full-time basis. My tithing can help to spread the gospel.

8. To Avoid a Curse.

"Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me" (Malachi 3:9).

Some people put their money into "a big with holes" (Haggai 1:6). They do not give God His tithe, but they eventually spend the money for automobile repairs, medical bills, and a thousand other things that they might have avoided if they had been faithful to God in their giving.

God said that the whole nation of Israel was cursed because they had not given God His due. God asked Israel to dedicate the gold of Jericho to Him, but Achan took a wedge of gold and hid it in a tent. It became a curse to him and his whole family.

I do not want God to curse my blessings. I want to give Him His tithe.

9. To Enjoy God's Blessing.

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse... and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Malachi 3:10). (See also Luke 6:38).

God blesses the people who pay tithes. They do not always have the most money or the best clothes, but they are blessed.

However, I am wary of those who promise, "If you give God a dollar, He will give you back four." The expectation of a return should not be our motivation for giving. And His richest blessings are not necessarily monetary.

But I do want God to notice me and remember me. He noticed that the widow put money into the treasury at the Temple. He noticed what Cornelius was giving. He noticed what Israel was not giving. He knows what we give and He notices when we give.

God has asked us to prove Him and see if He will not give us His blessings. I have trusted Him, tested Him, and tried Him, and I have concluded that it is better to give God what belongs to Him.

10. To Be Consistent.

"Be thou an example of the believers" (I Timothy 4:12).

Paying tithes will not save a person-everyone must be born again to be saved. But paying tithes will reap a blessing. Genuine Christian not only pay tithes, but they willingly pay tithes.

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