

Tithing

The word translated “tithe” in Hebrew actually means – a tenth part or ten percent.

The first incidence of tithing commences long before the law which came through Moses. The person who paid the tithe was the “father of faith” – Abraham.

Gen 14:20 And blessed be the most high God, who has delivered your enemies into your hand. And he gave him tithes of all.

This story is very significant because many people have balked against the teaching of tithing citing that it was only a law given to Israel through Moses and therefore does not apply to the Christian under the new covenant. This passage clearly shows it was something that is eternal as we relate to God and long predated the law. Tithing does not just apply to the nation of Israel.

Although the term “tithe” is only mentioned here, the idea of bringing some form of offering to God actually goes right back to the beginning of time. Cain and Abel both brought offerings to God. Cain’s offering was rejected and Abel’s was accepted by God. Right from the outset it is clear that while giving to God is something required of man by God, it is also imperative that man gives according to God’s requirements and not his own ideas. As we will see later, God not only lays out what we should give but also the attitude with which we are required to give as faithful servants of God.

Before we get into the “nuts and bolts” of tithing however, it is necessary to gain an understanding of attitudes behind giving or not giving.

1. Giving deals with the sinful behavior of **selfishness**. We all try to teach our children to share and not be selfish – because by our sinful nature we are naturally selfish (self centered or self absorbed). Giving is a constant reminder of the sin of selfishness and enables us to overcome in real ways the sin nature. There is no justification when we try to assert that we can’t afford to tithe. We create debt and obligations based on our chosen lifestyles and standards of living. Tithing is for all people of all nations and of all economic classes. It is by no means reserved for those who have more than they need to sustain their lifestyle. *Mark 12:41-44. And Jesus sat near the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called his disciples, and said to them, Truly I say unto you, That this poor widow has cast more in, than all those who have cast into the treasury: For all of them cast in of their abundance; but she of her poverty cast in all that she had, even all her living.* Who of us is as poor as this widow? Yet she gave one hundred percent of what she had and in God’s eyes it was worth more than everyone else’s gifts. Why? Because tithing is really a matter of the heart before God. For many years I was a financial consultant and the most interesting thing I found was that people generally spend everything they earn regardless of what they earn. All we do is upgrade our lifestyles and assets. Newer cars, bigger houses, eating out more, nicer clothes etc. If we do not commit to honor God with at least ten percent of our income we will find ourselves unable to “afford” it no matter how much we earn. If we find ourselves so in debt that there is more month left after payday then we need to do something radical with God’s help to change that so that we can be obedient to God. Perhaps get some financial counseling, consolidate debts, sell unnecessary possessions etc. Better to be obedient to God than shrug our shoulders and say “I can’t afford to tithe”.

2. Giving recognizes that what we have been blessed with in material gain is in fact the result of [God's enablement and blessing](#) on us. [Ecc 5:19](#) *Every man also to whom God has given riches and wealth, and has enabled him to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labor; this is the gift of God.* Who gives us the health, mental capacity and skills or talents to produce income for us? Who helps us find work whereby our skills and abilities can earn us an income? If you think its all you then perhaps you should think again.
3. Giving deals with the issue of [obedience to God](#). Adam and Eve rebelled against God by believing the lie that God was holding out on them by forbidding them to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. By giving we show our submission to God in obedience to Him. Had Adam and Eve remained obedient, death would not have passed on to all of mankind. The cost of their disobedience was more costly than they ever imagined. Not giving to God in obedience is also costly. [Mal 3:8-9](#) . *Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But you say, how have we robbed you? In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse: for you have robbed me, even this whole nation.* By not tithing we place ourselves under a curse, so why would we ever want to do that?
4. Giving tithes is [giving to God](#) – not the pastor, or minister. However, God has directed that His tithe be given to those who minister the gospel (under the new covenant), it is not our place to “control” the minister by not tithing, as has been the practice of some. Many years ago as a young pastor, I experienced this when many of the church members in my small congregation wanted to get rid of me. Rather than asking me to leave, they simply stopped tithing and for the last three months I was their pastor I received no wages whatsoever.

[Rom 15:27](#) *It has truly pleased them; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, then their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal (material) things.*

[1Cor 9:13](#) *Do you not know that they which minister about holy things, live off the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar?*

[Num 18:24](#) *But the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer as a heave offering unto the LORD, I have given to the Levites to inherit:*

The Levites were the priests that God appointed to minister spiritual things on behalf of the nation of Israel.

5. Giving deals with our attitudes about [trusting in God](#) to provide for us. This is perhaps one of the biggest obstacles in us giving freely to God. It is easy to rely on “money in hand” to meet our needs than on God. God wants to bless us more, but how many times have we prevented him from doing so because we don't really trust him at all to provide for us? Do you remember the rich young ruler that came to Jesus and asked what he should do to inherit eternal life? Jesus told him to go and sell all that he had and to come and follow him. Jesus has no issue with the wealthy excepting when their trust is in their wealth or possessions rather than God who provided it anyway. If we were to be obedient and give God what is required of us – a tithe of all we get, can we trust him to provide whatever else we need to meet our other obligations? One of the names attributed to God in the Old Testament is Jehovah Jirah. The name means, “The Lord our provider”.
6. Giving deals with the sin of [ungratefulness](#). The Psalmist said, *“I will enter His gates with thanksgiving in my heart, I will enter His courts with praise”*. [Psalm 100:4](#) . He is of course referring to the Tabernacle or Temple where God once resided among the children of Israel. So often people focus instead on what they don't have or their problems rather on being thankful for what they do have and enjoy. Sadly enough, often God has to allow us to lose things or loved ones before we wake up to be thankful for his daily blessings. We live instead in a “give me now” world. This is self centeredness at its worst. [Phil 4:6](#) says, *“Don't worry about anything; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God”* Before we ask anything of God, he requires that we first give thanks for what we already are blessed with and do have. If any of our prayers are not prefaced with thanksgiving we are praying

wrong. But when will we choose instead to become the giver rather than always wanting for ourselves? Do we really believe that it is more blessed to give than receive? It is frightening to see that being unthankful to God is the starting point down the path of sin and darkness.

[Rom 1:21](#) Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

Tithing in the Old Testament.

Who gets the tithes?

*[Num 18:26](#) Thus speak unto the Levites, and say unto them, When you take of the children of Israel the **tithes** which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then you shall offer up an heave offering of it for the LORD, even a tenth part of the tithe.*

*[Num 18:28](#) Thus you also shall offer a heave offering unto the LORD of all your **tithes**, which you receive of the children of Israel; and you shall give thereof the LORD'S heave offering to Aaron the priest.*

The above verses clearly illustrate that even the priests were to pay a tithe of the tithes and God instructed them to give it to Aaron, the high priest. That meant that ten percent of all the tithes in Israel went to one person – in this case Aaron. Can you imagine how wealthy this would have made Aaron?

Is tithing all we have to give?

This next scripture is going to really deal with the false notion that once we have paid our tithe we have done our duty in giving to God. *[Deu 12:6](#) And thither you shall bring your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and heave offerings of your hand, and your vows, and your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and of your flocks:*

WOW this is staggering. Look at all the different offerings that were brought before God by the children of Israel. The first two were for sin since Christ had not yet died for the sins of the world. Tithes remained separate from those offerings. The vows were offerings whereby you made a vow to give something to God over and above. The freewill offerings were “just because” offerings, not at all a requirement or obligation. The firstlings of flocks however was a requirement and were over and above all the previous offerings to God. God said that the firstborn of everything belonged to him. *[Exd 13:2](#) Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever opens the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine.* Giving your tithes is not enough!

What are the benefits of giving or tithing?

This is actually amazing. God commands us to give a tithe of all he blesses us with and yet if we are obedient he actually promises to bless us even more. So why do we hesitate in giving and being obedient? Is it because we really do not believe or trust God to be faithful to his promises?

[Deu 15:5-10](#) Only if you carefully hearken unto the voice of the LORD your God, to observe to do all these commandments which I command you this day. For the LORD your God blesses you, as he promised you: and you shall lend unto many nations, but you shall not borrow; and you shall reign over many nations, but they shall not reign over you. If there be among you a poor man of one of you brothers within any of you gates in your land which the LORD your God gives you, you shall not harden your heart, nor shut your hand from your poor brother: But you shall open your hand wide unto him, and shall

surely lend him sufficient for his need, [in that] which he needs. Beware that there be not a thought in your wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand; and your eye be evil against your poor brother, and you give him nothing; and he cry unto the LORD against you, and it be sin unto you. You shall surely give him, and your heart shall not be grieved when you give unto him: because that for this thing the LORD your God shall bless you in all your works, and in all that you put your hand unto.

Also have a look at what God promises in the book of Malachi.

*Mal 3:10 Bring all the **tithes** into the storehouse, that there may be meat in my house, and prove me now herewith, says 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.*

There is another principle and promise given in God's word about giving. "Give, and it shall be given unto you" ([Luke 6:38](#)).

How does God view those who do not tithe?

*Mal 3:8 Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed me. But you say, How have we robbed you? In **tithes** and offerings.*

OUCH! God says if we do not give him the tithe that belongs to him that we have actually robbed him. I don't know about you but I would not want God to view me as a robber.

Is tithing mentioned in the New Testament?

Yes it certainly is. Here is what Jesus himself said;

*Mat 23:23 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you pay **tithe** of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these you ought to have done, and not to leave the other undone .*

Although Jesus was not actually teaching on tithing here, he simply says you ought to do it but don't think for a moment that it is all that God requires of us.

This next passage is found in Hebrews and reiterates that tithing began in our father of faith – Abraham and that even Levi being yet unborn is considered to have been a party to that giving in Abraham, though he was born several generations later. Notice also that the priesthood was "Commanded" to take tithes from the people.

Heb 7:1-10 For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abides a priest continually. Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils. And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham: But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises. And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better. And here men that die receive tithes; but there he received them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives. And as I may so say, Levi also, who receives tithes, paid tithes in Abraham. For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him.

In this next verse Paul clearly establishes that the Gentiles also were obliged to give to those who minister spiritual things to them.

[Rom 15:27](#) *It has pleased them; and their debtors they are . For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, then their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal (material) things.*

Here is another scripture in the New Testament that shows that tithing was not only for “back then” or only for the nation of Israel.

[1Cor 9:13](#) *Do you not know that they which minister about holy things, live off the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar?*

In Paul’s instructions to Timothy he says the following;

[1Tim 5:17](#) *Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of **double honor**, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine.*

The term “double honor” here refers to a double honorarium or double the normal wages given. Many church boards have it the other way around. Let those who rule well get minimal wages so that they stay humble – why should they earn more than us? It is an utter shame that some pastors (Elders) are paid so miserably. Maybe its because there are not enough tithes coming in. God is not at all pleased with that and we need to repent of our disobedience and selfishness. We need to give our tithes and also freewill offerings and at all times be obedient to give to the needs of others as God directs us. DOING ONE WITHOUT THE OTHER IS NOT OKAY OR ACCEPTABLE TO GOD.

What attitude are we to have when giving to God?

[Exd 25:2](#) *Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that gives it **willingly** with his heart you shall take my offering.*

This is what God expected under the old covenant and nothing has changed under the new covenant.

[2Cor 9:7](#) *Every man according as he purposes in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loves a **cheerful giver**.*

God does not accept, nor will he bless our giving if we do it grudgingly (I’d rather not). Neither does he accept our giving when we do it because we feel compelled to because of obligation. When we give back to God because we are truly thankful for all he has blessed us with knowing he will always meet our needs, then God will bless us in our giving to him and it will be acceptable to him. God is very concerned about our attitude of heart along with our obedience to him. Unfortunately there are many who referring to the law of sowing and reaping suggest that if we have financial needs then we should “sow a seed” by giving and then God will multiply it. Its like a formula that obligates God which is wrong. God blesses us because he loves us not because we have obligated him under some law. If you are giving to get you have missed the whole point.

Where should tithes be given?

This sadly enough has become another point of contention among believers. If we go back to the foundation of tithing we see that tithes were taken to the house of God. It was not sent anywhere else, not given to the poor directly. It was not even permissible to give it to Prophets. It was to go only to the priests or rulers of the temple or Synagogue. It would seem to me therefore that the tithe goes only to the local church fellowship that you attend. However, as mentioned previously we are also instructed to give to the poor and bring free will offerings also. These can be given anywhere we feel we should give – to a

missionary, evangelist, the homeless etc. This practice appears to be in keeping with the establishment of tithing given to Moses by God. I see nothing in scripture that would infer or indicate this has changed so I am not sure what the argument is over.

On what am I supposed to tithe?

There also appears to be a lot of confusion over this issue. When we look back at the scriptures concerning the tithe it is clearly based on “increase”. So in effect anything we receive from God that we did not previously have whether earned by our own hand or not, a tithe of that should be given to God. Under the Old Testament most people were farmers and herders so they tithed in kind rather than in currency. In our day and age we would tithe on currency. Here are a few examples of increase that I believe we should tithe on.

1. Wages
2. Profits made on anything – selling items or even a house. The increased profits on the sale of a house and so on.
3. If you are not sure, simply pray about it and see what your spirit says – then obey.

Where many people disagree is on whether tithes should be paid BEFORE taxes or after taxes. There is no indication in scripture either way. In my own opinion God requires a tithe on “what we get”, hence tax deductions which are automatically deducted in most cases do not go to you. If however you get a tax refund then you should give tithes on that also.

Regardless of your interpretation of what you should tithe remember always that you are doing it as unto God himself and he is watching your heart – are you being selfish or afraid that he will not provide for your other needs?

Let us put our trust in the Lord, be generous and obedient. Giving with a joyful heart to bless others and extend the Kingdom of God. Lets stop making excuses based on our poor money management and lifestyle choices. Give to the Lord first and then learn how to leave on the rest. Lets face it. If you went to work tomorrow and they said that times were tough and that they would have to cut wages by 10% in order to keep everyone employed, I would bet we all would make the necessary adjustments to our lifestyles to live on 10% less. But because we are not forced to tithe we feel we cannot do it. Lets honestly examine our hearts and honor the Lord who redeemed us from our sins and has given us eternal life.

God bless you as you give generously and obediently to others.

By: Ken Crause