

Tithing

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Pastor Chris recently referred a question from a website visitor to me. The question was, "what does your church believe about tithing?" I prefaced my response by stating that my **opinion** or New Wine having an official **opinion** or **position** about the subject ("in my opinion") is **worthless**. What God has to say about this matter is what is important, and we must go to His Word, the Bible, to see what He says about money, tithing and giving.

Let us begin by defining the word: "tithe." The Hebrew word translated as tithe means "one-tenth" or "the tenth part." You can find this in your Strong's concordance [H4643].

In God's Word, Jesus talks about money a lot. But, I never see him talking about gaining cash for personal reasons like the Word-Faith Prosperity crowd seems to believe. I see him talking more about losing it all for the sake of the kingdom if need be. Consider:

Matthew 16:26 - For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

Mark 10:28-30 - Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee. And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.

Jesus also talks a whole lot about how we manage money and compares our ability to manage money to our ability to manage the giftings he has given us to further his kingdom. A passage in Luke 16 comes to mind. Jesus said:

Luke 16:10-12 - He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?

In that passage, Jesus specifically talks about **making up your mind** about who you are going to serve: God or the world, and the "world" has always been about accumulating either cash or power.

It's also interesting to note that he talks in Luke 16:10-12 about being faithful with what belongs to another man. The inference to me is that God is saying "it's ALL mine, not just a tenth. All you have is mine and I give it to you. Use it wisely and

seek me on how to use it for the kingdom." We had a brother in church once who prayed before an offering collection: "Lord, show us how much of what you give us we can keep." It's not about satisfying a law of giving a tenth, though that is a clear command in Malachi. **But it does not stop at the tenth!** Malachi 3:8-10 talks about tithes AND offerings.

Malachi 3:8-10 Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, 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.

The most obvious example of this total giving was the early New Testament church. [Read Acts 2-5 all the way through, it will inspire and even scare you!] The early church put ALL THAT THEY HAD, money, possessions, you name it into the pot. They trusted God through the church elders to mete out the resources were they were guided of the Lord and they trusted that their personal needs would still be met.

So the real question to me for one who is born again and walks in the Spirit is,

"God it's all yours. The word says I give a tenth to you to keep the physical offices and works of the church going. How much else should I kick in today to help fund works that you know are needed?"

The final comment I would make is that many folks seem to hold the 'Law' as the old covenant. This would potentially exclude a believer from any obligation regarding the tithe. Jesus cleared that one up head on. He did not come to destroy the law, but rather to fulfill it. [Matthew 5:17].

Matthew 5:17 - Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

And he told us WE can fulfill it, too, when we walk in his grace with love towards God and love towards our brothers.

Matthew 22:36-40 - Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Are we walking in that level of love if we will not even give a tenth of our time, energy, and resources back to the God who brought them our way in the first place? Tithing is a good discipline to help us keep our focus on **Who** and what is most important in this world and in the world to come.