

HOW TO TITHE WISELY

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There are two kinds of giving in the Bible. First, there is tithing. Tithing is giving to God a portion of your increase. Every time there was a harvest, the people of God would take 10% of the harvest and give a tithe to God. In today's world, we receive our harvest in the form of paychecks. Therefore, every time you receive a paycheck, you are receiving an increase. Second, there is an offering. This is giving to God something you already possess, and this type of giving is sacrificial in nature.

Now, specifically concerning tithing: The word tithe comes from a Hebrew word which means tenth. Therefore, when the Bible speaks about tithing, it is referring to one tenth of a person's increase. Therefore, the goal of tithing is to give 10% of your increase. The purpose of giving to God a portion of your increase is specifically designed to teach and live the principle of giving (Luke 6:36-38).

In life, there are many attitudes and behaviors that can destroy your faith: Selfishness, materialism, greed, self-centeredness, hoarding, bitterness, pride, anger, idolatry, etc. There are also attitudes and behaviors that will grow and strengthen your faith and bless your life: Generosity, compassion, giving, faith, forgiveness, focusing on God, clear identity of who you are in Jesus Christ, etc.

Tithing is the spiritual principle of freeing you from the things that will hinder your spiritual growth (Hebrews 12:1-2) and opening you up to the things that grow your faith. Why? Because tithing challenges the very place in our soul where the bad things like to live. It shines the light on the dark place where these attitudes and behaviors like to live, surviving under the radar, operating covertly, whispering in the dark. Tithing opens up the heart, sets you free, gives the Spirit of God free reign in your life to do His thing. Most importantly, tithing shines the light of truth in your innermost being. In other words, it helps deal with the problem of self-deception.

I knew a man who once said, "I'll never go to church; they're money grubbers, always trying to get your money." His wife was very insightful. Speaking about her husband she said, "Living with him is like living with a black hole. He sucks in everything, nothing ever comes back. How do you love a man who never gives anything back?"

My friends, that is an excellent question. In the end, tithing isn't really about money, and it definitely isn't about God who needs or wants your money. In reality, tithing is about you and your faith. God gave us a simple principle that, when employed, has the power to set you free from the very things that make living miserable - being only a taker.

One final note concerning tithing: Jesus said, "For wherever you place your treasure, there will be your heart." Remember that even though tithing is about you, you are giving it TO God. In other words, give it to something or somewhere where God is moving. God wants to build His kingdom. Find a place where you can place your heart so that your giving will make a difference for His kingdom.

Some Frequently Asked Questions

How often should I give?

It depends on how you receive your increase. Some people receive their paycheck once a month, some twice a month, some every other week, others only when they make a sale. Tithe according to your period when you receive an increase.

Should I tithe on my gross or net wages?

This question is often asked due to the nature of our tax structure in the United States. The answer is - it depends. If you tithe on your net pay(or take-home pay), then when you receive your tax refund, you can tithe on that as well, and you would have tithed on your increase. However, some people choose to tithe on their gross. They do this for three reasons: 1) Their tax deduction for charitable giving is higher and therefore their refund is higher; 2) Their refund has already been tithed on so they don't need to tithe again; and 3) People often tithe on their gross because they understand the connection between tithing and other areas of giving in their lives.

Since they want to have a complete giving of their self-will to God and a life full of the healing power of forgiveness, they also tithe (or give) on their gross as well. It's like this - if tithing is turning on the hose, then why turn it on a trickle when I can turn it on full force?

I'm in sales. I haven't sold anything in awhile so I have no paycheck (increase). So do I quit tithing?

Well, it is difficult to tithe when you have no increase, since tithing is a percentage of your increase. The real issue is how much of an offering should you give. In other words, since there is no increase on which to tithe, then any giving you do give will be sacrificial because it comes from what you already have. 2 Corinthians 8 may help see what happens when someone chooses to give an offering, even when they are unable to tithe.

1 "And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. 2 Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. 3 For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, 4 they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. 5 And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will."

The church in Macedonia was not able to tithe since they had no increase, they were considered in poverty. However, they choose to give an offering (a sacrificial gift) because they first gave themselves to God. In the process, they received a great blessing.

I want to tithe, but I am barely making it now. If I start giving 10% of my pay to God then I will go under. Can I start with a little and work up?

This is a very good question. The specific spiritual principle it deals with is: How much can I trust God to come through on His promise? Trusting God is the primary manner in which our faith grows. As we mature, God leads us through experiences that show us where we need to surrender our own agenda and trust Him and His direction for our life. Consequently, if there is an area of my life where I have yet to trust God, often God will patiently wait for me as I learn through life's experiences to surrender to Him.

Here is an illustration about surrendering to God in the area of tithing. There was a single mother who was struggling to stay afloat. The financial pressure was so great she couldn't live under pressure any longer, so she decided to start tithing 10% and see what would happen because she believed it couldn't get any worse. It changed her life.

Here is what happened: The first thing tithing did was give her power over her money. It put her back in control of her finances. Second, tithing reduced her anxiety. She was stressed out every week, on edge, wondering when it was going to come down. Third, tithing brought God's power into the picture. For the first time she began experiencing God moving throughout her financial life. He began meeting real needs in real ways. Finally, her faith started to grow again. She did not realize that because she was so stressed out about her finances, she spent money on things to divert her attention from her stress, which only increased her problem.

By tithing, she began growing in her faith. She began to change. She noticed that she did not need as many diversions as before. All of the little expenses that surrounded her subconscious need for diversion were no longer necessary. She found her sustenance in God, and the peace from knowing God more deeply played out into every aspect of her life. The things of the world had less hold on her and she could live a fuller life with fewer things. She had found freedom through simplicity.

Conclusion:

Tithing is a spiritual practice given to us by God in order that we might be set free from the very attitudes and behaviors that destroy the soul. Is it possible that the time has come for you to begin to be set free and begin growing again in your faith? Then I encourage you to begin making the commitment to tithe. I believe you will find a new level of growth and blessing in your life!