



TITHES AND OFFERINGS AT THE RED DOOR COMMUNITY CHURCH

All Christians innately know that there is a calling and a mandate upon them to be a giver. It is a desire that fills our heart and compels us from the moment that we receive the message of the Gospel and we are born again. We desire to give our lives, our time, our talents, our resources, our money in any way that will honour and bless God, and that will honour and bless His Church. And there is no mystery as to why. The spirit of God now dwells within us and it is God's nature to give, and to give extravagantly and abundantly.

For all those who call this church home, our desire at the Red Door is that they would give freely, generously and cheerfully. That what we purpose in our hearts to give is born out of our relationship with God, and is born out of our response to God's love, grace, faithfulness and generosity towards us. We do not want to be people who give out of fear, pride or condemnation, and we do not want to be people who are gripped by greed and a love of money who don't give at all. This doesn't reflect the heart of God, it doesn't glorify Him in any way and it cripples and robs His bride who is the Church.

Galatians 5:1 says

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. In Christ we have been set free.

In Christ, we are freed from the yoke of greed, we are freed from the yoke of selfishness and we are freed from the yoke of loving and trusting in money and possessions. Christ has set us free, and who Jesus sets free is free wholly and eternally.

When it comes to the subject of tithing and giving it is also important to note that these are not salvation issues. God's love for you is not dependent upon how much you give in tithes and offerings. His love for you doesn't change. Your acceptance by God is dependent solely upon your faith in Jesus. However, even though we are no longer under the Law of Moses, the Law is still a reflection of the character of God and the moral principles that if lived by, result in a fruitful and prosperous life. As we are now people who are under the Covenant of Grace the issue of tithing is one that is of principle rather than Law. As we see in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, what is now required of us is so much more than what is required under the Law. Under grace it is not just 10% that is required, but everything.

1. Tithing

Across the global Church there are many different views on the issue of tithing (giving the first 10% of your income to your church). Some believe that it is a sin not to tithe and to not tithe is to rob God (Malachi 3) and others believe that tithing was a part of the Old Testament Law and therefore now no longer relevant for New Testament believers, who are under grace not under the Law. However in Matthew 23:23 Jesus makes it clear that we should still practice to tithe.

The truth is that tithing reflects a grateful heart that wants to give back to God a portion of what He has given us; in reality, what is already His. Tithing is our opportunity to show

God that He is first in our lives. James 1:17 says that “every good and perfect gift is from above ...,” so we have an opportunity to tangibly show God He is the “owner” of our finances by giving back to Him the first of what He gives us.

Actually, scripture tells us that the tithe belongs to God (Lev 27:30) and so the tithe is not giving, it is actually returning to God what is His. And God's promise is that when the first is dedicated, consecrated or given to Him, he will redeem the rest. This principal is spoken of by Paul in Romans 11:16 when he says that “if the part of the dough offered as first fruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches.” We also see this principal in the death of Jesus who was “the lamb of God”. His life was sacrificed, was given, as God's first born Son, and this redeemed all men and women.

It is also important to note that the principal of the tithe or giving of our first fruits means that we give the first. When we receive our income, in order to put God first, we need to set aside and give the first portion, or 10%, of that income before we do anything else with it. This act requires faith. It is an act of faith to give God your first, not giving Him what you have left over. And Hebrews 11:6 tells us that without faith it is impossible to please God.

There are three reasons why we should tithe:

a. Tithing reflects our heart

What is the most important thing to you? Jesus said in Matthew 6:21 that “where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” We can see the reality of that in the world today and the exaltation of the financially successful, and more personally you can see that by looking at your own bank account.

b. Tithing is biblical

Long before tithing was a practice of the Israelite people, Cain and Abel, the second generation of the human race, brought an offering to the Lord. The Lord blessed Abel's offering, but rejected Cain's. Abel brought the “firstborn of his flock,” while Cain brought “some of the fruits of the soil” as an offering. God wants to be first. The following scriptures show how tithing is biblical:

Genesis 14:18-20

Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said: “Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand.” And he gave him a tithe of all.

Genesis 28:22

“And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God's house, and of all that you give me I will surely give a tenth to you.”

Leviticus 27:30

And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's. It is holy to the Lord.

Deuteronomy 26:1-2

And it shall be, when you come into the land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, and you possess it and dwell in it, that you shall take some of the first of all the produce of the ground, which you shall bring from your land that the Lord your God is giving you, and put it in a basket and go to the place where the Lord your God chooses to make His name abide.

Deuteronomy 14:23

Bring this tithe to the designated place of worship - the place the LORD your God chooses for his name to be honored - and eat it there in his presence.

This applies to your tithes of grain, new wine, olive oil, and the firstborn males of your flocks and herds. Doing this will teach you always to fear the LORD your God.

c. Tithing is a benefit

God's kingdom is built on multiplication, not division. God uses the tithe as an investment where everyone involved gets a return on the investment. Obviously, the church and the kingdom are blessed, and yet God's nature is to also bless the giver. We don't give to get, but God can't help himself when His children obediently tithe their first fruits. This principle is highlighted in the passage below:

2 Chronicles 31:4-10

Moreover he commanded the people who dwelt in Jerusalem to contribute support for the priests and the Levites, that they might devote themselves to the Law of the Lord. As soon as the commandment was circulated, the children of Israel brought in abundance the first fruits of grain and wine, oil and honey, and of all the produce of the field; and they brought in abundantly the tithe of everything. And the children of Israel and Judah, who dwelt in the cities of Judah, brought the tithe of oxen and sheep; also the tithe of holy things which were consecrated to the Lord their God they laid in heaps. In the third month they began laying them in heaps, and they finished in the seventh month. And when Hezekiah and the leaders came and saw the heaps, they blessed the Lord and His people Israel. Then Hezekiah questioned the priests and the Levites concerning the heaps. And Azariah the chief priest, from the house of Zadok, answered him and said, "Since the people began to bring the offerings into the house of the Lord, we have had enough to eat and have plenty left, for the Lord has blessed His people; and what is left is this great abundance."

2. Offerings - Going Beyond the Tithe

Some think that because they give a tenth of their income to their church that they then have the other 90% to spend on themselves. The bottom line with all our wealth and possessions is that none of them belongs to us. They all belong to God. Scriptures tells us that the earth and everything in it belongs to God (Psl 24:1). We are not owners. We are stewards. We have been entrusted with gifts and talents and resources and we have been entrusted with these things to use them in a way that would honour God and advance his Kingdom. This principal is seen in the Parable of Talents (Matthew 25).

Therefore, we are all to be mindful of stewarding well what God has blessed us with and our giving should never be limited to 10%. The tithe is Gods. It is what we bring to His house to honour Him. The other 90% we use and we give according to how He has blessed us and how He is leading us.

But when it comes to money we may ask the question, "how much?" The answer to this question is given very succinctly and simply in the following passage of scripture:

2 Corinthians 9:7

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.

Some principals from scripture to consider and to help guide us:

Give generously

Consider 2 Corinthians 8-9. If you want to grasp giving, read those chapters and read them again. Not just the “God loves the cheerful giver” section, but the whole thing. The Macedonians gave generously, “beyond their means,” and begged earnestly for “the favour” of doing so. This is radical giving, not just throwing some pocket change in the plate as it passes by.

Give cheerfully

There is a reward for giving, but it is dependent upon a heart free from a lust for the temporal rewards of this earth (Matt.6:1-4). Gospel giving is cheerful and voluntary because it trusts that every deposit into the kingdom will earn eternal interest. If you can't give cheerfully, give anyway (don't compound your internal sin with external sin), but as you do, confess your struggle, seek clarity on the 'disconnect' between your heart and the gospel, pray for joy, and walk in repentance.

Give sacrificially

This is probably the most under-appreciated and under-applied principle for Christian giving today. It inconveniences us, and the flesh is quick to offer excuses and justification, but the gospel calls us to deep and radical sacrifice. In 1 John 3:16-17, the apostle exhorts the Church to care for brothers in need as an overflow and implication of gospel love, the type of love that lays down one's life for another. Do we actually give to the point that we feel it and the feeling stings? Does the call to take up our cross (Matt. 16:24-26) not also carry the charge to lay down our wealth and possessions?

Give spontaneously

A heart freed by the gospel does not wait for opportunities to give. It intentionally seeks them out. Gospel giving looks for chances to bless others and listens to the needs of those near and far. Gospel generosity gives to those who beg (Matt. 5:42), risking the gift might not be used properly (which is not to say that it is not righteous and wise to occasionally withhold support for some greater purpose). Those walking in the light of the gospel engage in good deeds and meet pressing needs anytime and anywhere they arise.

Give regularly

Though we should give as need arises, we should also be consistent and disciplined in giving. Giving is linked with prayer and fasting (Matt. 6:1-18), and both should contain some element of discipline and regularity. In 1 Corinthians 16:2, the apostle Paul explicitly commends a disciplined and orderly form of giving, in addition to whatever spontaneous offerings and gifts we might be compelled to give.

Give secretly

I don't think that Jesus necessarily intends for us to sign Christmas cards “John Doe,” but there is a general theme of secret giving for the sake of eternal reward. The flesh craves the praise of man, and thus we need to beware the hypocrisy and tendency to give in an effort to purchase the acclaim, attention and affection of others (Matt. 6:2-4).

Give thankfully

Grace is the basis for gratitude. As those who have received grace, we should gratefully extend it to others.

3. When It's Hard To Give

There are many reasons why people find it difficult to give tithes and offerings. Sometimes a difficulty or a reluctance to give is related to greed or a love of money. Sometimes it is simply a lack of discipline in this area or it may be a lack of awareness of biblical financial principles.

If you struggle to give freely, generously and cheerfully then ask yourself the question "Why?" In all areas of giving, as with all aspects of our lives, we are to be lead by the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who leads and guides us into all truth and it is the Holy Spirit who brings correction and leads us to repentance. Giving tests our hearts, and reveals where the affections of our hearts lie. Where giving is hard, it is often because we are devoted to, and are serving money, rather than God. Matthew 6:24 says that we cannot serve both God and money. When giving is hard because money has our devotion instead of God then we need to confess our sin, turn to God and repent and then begin to walk in obedience to His will.

Whilst often giving is difficult because of an incorrect heart attitude, there are times where life and family situations make tithing and giving difficult. Some may be in a situation where they are a Christian, but their spouse is not, and this makes it impossible to give tithes and offerings because of the unbelieving spouse's attitude towards such things. Some may also be in the position where there simply isn't enough money to give tithes or offerings. Situations like these need to be handled with prayer and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. There is no place for condemnation in the life of the believer. Where we are faced with situations such as these it is important to not to get burdened with guilt, but to prayerfully seek God's wisdom and guidance.

If you don't currently tithe and give offerings then our encouragement to you is to start. God says that we can test him in this area. Begin to follow biblical financial principles and begin to take hold, by faith, of the promises of God. Don't wait until your financial situation improves before you begin. Most likely it will be the act of tithing and giving that will be the thing that will bring freedom to your finances and your attitude towards money. Trust Him with this area of your life. He will show himself faithful.

For a more detailed explanation on tithing refer to:

- <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/sermons/toward-the-tithe-and-beyond>
- <http://www.lifechurch.tv/watch/multiply-2013/1>