

Why give?

“The earth is the Lord’s, and all it contains.” Psalms 24:1

“And what do you have that you did not receive?” 1 Corinthians 4:7

God is the Creator and owner of all that is in the earth, including your financial resources. God charges us to be good stewards of what He has given to us. The money we have is a blessing from God and belongs to Him. How we use our financial resources are a reflection of our heart towards God.

Giving consists of four progressive stages, with each stage building upon the previous:

- **Tithing** – A reflection of our testimony to God’s ownership.
- **Obedience** – Sharing obediently in accord with God’s Word in order to help others in need.
- **Abundance** – A loving expression of our desire to share with someone who needs much.
- **Sacrifice** – Yielding or foregoing personal desires or wants in order to meet the needs of others. Assessed according to attitude, not the amount given.

Not only does the tithe belong to God, but all belongs to God.

To whom do I give?

“Bring all of the tithes into the storehouse so there will be enough food in my Temple. If you do,’ says the Lord Almighty, ‘I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won’t have enough room to take it in! Your crops will be abundant, for I will guard them from insects and disease. Your grapes will not shrivel before they are ripe,’ says the Lord Almighty. ‘Then all the nations will call you blessed, for your land will be such a delight,’ says the Lord.” Malachi 3:10

In Malachi 3, the Lord instructs the Israelites to bring their tithe into the “storehouse.” The Old Testament storehouse fed (1) the tribe of Levi and the priests of Aaron, (2) the prophets, (3) the Hebrew widows and orphans living within the city, and (4) the Gentile widows and orphans living in and around the city.

The New Testament and modern day equivalent to the storehouse is the local church. The local church provides for the needs of (1) the pastors and staff, (2) missionaries, (3) widows, orphans and single parents living in the community, and (4) the non-believers in the local community.

We encourage our members to give to the local church, as a corporate body of Christ, in order to support the saints.

What is a tithe?

The definition of tithe is to offer one-tenth of any property or produce. Tithing is one of the first standards found in the Bible. In Genesis, Abraham tithed. The Law noted in Deuteronomy 26 also defines how the Jews were to tithe. In the New Testament, Jesus Christ replaced the Law. We now live under grace; however, this is not a license to do nothing.

In 2 Corinthians 9:7, we are instructed “Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” Our attitude in giving is an indicator of God’s lordship in our lives. He desires for us to be joyous and merciful in our giving, not tithe under begrudging submission to His Law.

Many people give above 10 percent and have much more to give, but their hearts are not right (1 Corinthians 13:3). Others may not be able to give as much, but their hearts are dedicated to the Lord (Mark 12:42-44). God is looking for willing and obedient hearts, regardless of how much we give.

“I do not believe one can settle how much we ought to give. I am afraid the only safe rule is to give more than we can spare. In other words, if our expenditure on comforts, luxuries, amusements, etc., is up to the standard common among those with the same income as our own, we are probably giving away too little. If our charities do not at all pinch or hamper us, I should say they are too small. There ought to be things we should like to do and cannot do because our charitable expenditures excludes them.”

— C.S. Lewis

What about tithing while in debt?

“Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and enlarge the harvest of your righteousness.” 2 Corinthians 9:10

A good farmer will always set aside seed stock to use for the next season. If this was not done, he would never grow another crop. As Christians, our seed stock is our tithe. In Proverbs 3:9-10, we are to honor God with the first fruits of all that we receive. Our financial resources belong to God, not anyone else including creditors. Nevertheless, in Proverbs 22:1, God instructs us to maintain a good witness. Therefore, we must maintain the vow we made to our creditors. If debts are made, then debts must be paid. Psalm 37:21 states that “The wicked borrows and does not pay back, but the righteous is gracious and gives.”

In the case of tithing while in debt, tithes may be paid on money not already pledged to creditors but available to disperse at our will. However, this is only true if the vow to the creditor was made before making a pledge to tithe. Our commitment to give to God always takes precedence over any payments or commitments to creditors for debts that were contracted after a pledge to tithe.

Again, God is looking for the right attitude in our giving. We are to be willing to give back to the Lord a portion of what He has entrusted to us. We are to be looking for ways to give rather than ways not to give. Those in debt may still be able to give, just in a smaller amount and remain faithful to that commitment. Their giving can increase as God provides.

Should I give beyond the tithe?

“At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality, as it is written: ‘He who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little did not have too little.’” 2 Corinthians 8:14

Giving beyond the tithe should be an outward expression of our spiritual commitment to the Lord. Our hearts are to be willing and obedient. When giving beyond the tithe, we are to give out of our abundance.

We may make a commitment to give, promising a certain amount of money with the acknowledgment that it is based on faith. We may also give non-cash donations which include time, services, food, furniture, and clothing. Gifts with appreciated values may also be given; such as stocks, bonds, real estate, etc. Sacrificial giving should be a result of the proper heart attitude and not used as a means to impress others with our giving.

God is more concerned with our attitude in giving rather than the amount. Nevertheless, He does ask us to give our tithes as the minimum.

“My take on tithing in America is that it’s a middle-class way of robbing God. Tithing to the church and spending the rest on your family is not a Christian goal. It’s a diversion. The real issue is: How shall we use God’s trust fund—namely, all we have—for His glory? In a world with so much misery, what lifestyle should we call our people to live? What example are we setting?”

— John Piper