

What Does the Bible Say?



Giving "giving" a Bad Name!

News Flash: The dude on T.V. doesn't always speak for Scripture

There is no doubt that many people have used God's teaching on money to pad their own pockets and take advantage of God's people. To be honest, there are very few Scriptural doctrines that haven't been abused by fleshly men to mistreat people. This is why it is

so important for every believer to be rooted and grounded in his Bible.

However, we cannot allow the abuse of a truth to keep us from understanding and applying the truth itself. The practice of

tithing is an important part of worship in both the Old Testament and the New. Although, giving of our financial resources has often been the source of much pain and misunderstanding, the Bible speaks very clearly about money and stewardship.



The purpose of tithing is to secure not the tithe but the tither, not the gift but the giver, not the possession but the possessor, not your money but you for God.

-unknown



Is Money that important?

Take a look at Matt. 6:19-24. The red highlighted section always troubled me. I did not understand why it was there. The passage about the light of the body is wedged in between to sections about money. Nothing in the Bible is there by chance, so what does an "evil eye" have to do with earthly treasure and serving mammon (money)?

For a long time I struggled to understand what this meant. Then I discovered that having an "evil eye" was a Jewish idiom for being greedy and selfish. For example, look at Deuteronomy 15:9:

*Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand; and **thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought;** and he cry unto the Lord against thee, and it be sin unto thee.*

Now look at the passage in Matt. again. If an "evil eye" means selfish and greedy, do you see what Jesus is teaching here? In the midst of teaching about

money, Jesus says, "If your eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness."

Your view of money, wealth, material things is a measuring stick showing where you are in your spiritual maturity. Does that mean if I am struggling spiritually all I have to do is give more money? Absolutely not!

Jesus is saying that "giving" is a thermometer that tells the temperature of your spiritual life. A thermometer can only tell the temperature it can't change the temperature. It is an indicator of where you are at. Jesus is saying, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

This is a fact because money, above all other things, already controls so much about our lives. Nothing is more easily turned into an idol because we all need money to live.

Most of the decisions we make regarding our life, family, and activities are based on how much money we have and how much things cost.

Using Jesus' thermometer, what is the spiritual temperature of your life?

The Light of the Body?

19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: 20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: 21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. **22 The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. 23 But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!**

24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. - Matt. 6:19-24

Tithing in the New Testament

There is much controversy about whether tithing is a NT concept. Many believe that tithing was done away with the law of Moses. Because of this, we will be looking only to the NT to instruct us on money and stewardship.

1 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. 2 Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. 3 And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem. 4 And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me. - 1 Co. 16:1-4

New Testament Giving

The church in Corinth had serious problems. They were breaking up into factions, with one group following one leader and another group following another leader. They were misusing spiritual gifts, and they had let Pagan rituals come into the church. Paul had dealt with all these things in Chapters 1-15. Now he is winding up his letter and he speaks about the principles of their giving.

Notice in the 1 Corinthians 16 (above) he says, “the” collection and not “a” collection. The practice of tithes and offerings was already practiced and well known. He did not have to instruct them to give when they met. They were already doing that. Now he was instructing them on the proper manner of giving and what was expected.

There are 8 principles about New testament giving which Paul gives the Corinthians.

Principle #1 - What is the Purpose of Giving?

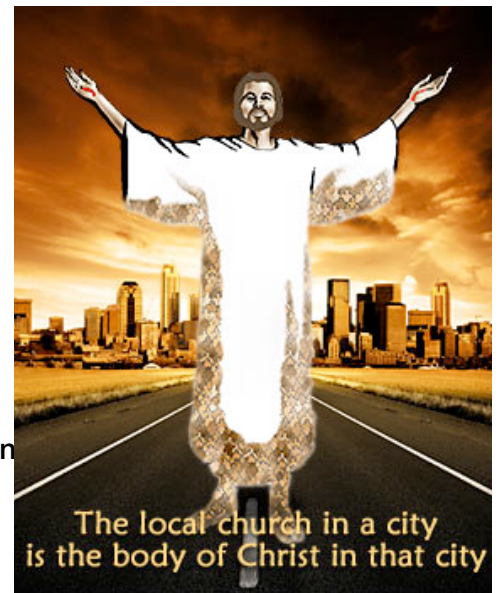
The number one purpose of giving in the New Testament is “for the saints” (v. 1). In this

particular instance, Paul was going to send money to the church at Jerusalem which was poor and destitute by this time. The first priority of giving is for the saints. This is not the only responsibility of the church, but it is the most important. Paul was the greatest missionary and church planter that has ever existed, but we see in scripture that he never took an offering to send him on journeys, or start new churches.

He collected money for aid to the brethren. James chapter 1 says that true religion involves caring for the widows and orphans and keeping yourself unspotted from the world. Now, there are other things that you can do to give to God, like other ministries and such, but any ministry that is biblically based and worth its salt will press home the point that there is nothing more important than supporting your local church.

1 Timothy 3:15 says that the local assembly is the “pillar and ground of the truth.”

The first principle of NT giving is that stewardship should begin “for the saints” and the ministry of your own local assembly.



Your local church is investing everything they have into you and your family. This is where you should first invest in them.

Principle #2 - These principles of giving are universal

The instructions Paul gives here are not simply for the church in Corinth. They are applicable to every NT church wherever they are. Notice in verse 1 Paul says, “as I have given order to the churches of Galatia...” There were many churches in Galatia and Paul meant for everyone to heed what he was about to say.

Principle #3 - When should giving be done?

Paul says giving should be done, “Upon the first day of [each] week.” Notice that giving is not supposed to be sporadic, or just whenever you feel like it. It is not supposed to be just when a huge need arises or when the “Spirit leads.”

It is to be done every week. It should be consistent. Paul didn’t say, I am taking a gift to Jerusalem so every one get together and see how much you can give and I will take that.” He said giving should be done every week as an act of worship.

This forces us to consider stewardship, the gifts God has given us, and the sacrifices He has made. Giving is done every week. It is not to finance special projects, when there is an emotional plea, or when a desperate need arises. It is wonderful to give to these things, but that does not constitute New Testament stewardship.

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Principle #5 - Who should Give?

Paul tells us who should give. He says, “let every one of you...” 99% of the people who don’t give say it is because they can’t afford to give. This is the biggest sign that people are spiritually immature because it is a greater sign of trust and faith to give when you don’t have much than to give when you have more than enough.

If you have to give up something in order to tithe faithfully, it is a greater act of worship than the one who doesn’t have to sacrifice anything to give.

Do you remember the story of the widow and the two mites she gave in Luke 21? Everyone was tossing their gifts on the pile of offerings and she came secretly and gave two mites. Jesus did not rebuke the Priests for taking this poor woman’s last two mites did he? No, he said that her gift was greater than all the others.

“I don’t make enough to tithe” is not going to be a very good excuse when we stand before God.

But we must also understand that if you are in a position where tithing will get your house taken away or your lights shut off, you have been disobedient in your stewardship up to this point. Because of this, you may have to work toward tithing faithfully.

My wife and I have helped quite a few families start and maintain a budget. We were always the couple who said, “Man, where did all my money go!?” If getting on a budget and working to become financially stable enough to tithe is what you need then that is what you should do.

When discussing who should give, Paul said, “let every one of you...” Not just the Pastor or the Sunday School teachers, but everyone. This doesn’t mean just the rich people. It means everyone.

Tithing and giving offerings is an act of worship and it is a barometer showing how much we actually trust God’s Word. God doesn’t want you to starve in order to tithe, but we are to be responsible and plan accordingly when assessing our finances.

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Principle #6 - How Much Should I Give?

This is the real issue isn't it? We want to know how much. Paul gives us the answer, "As God has prospered him..." Throughout the Old Testament, 10% was the rule. From the first tithe Abraham paid to Melchizedek, it was always 10%. Now there are some learned people who say that 10% is nowhere mentioned in the New Testament and therefore we are not bound by that number.

It is true that 10% is not commanded in the New Testament, but what is unacceptable to God is giving Him the left overs. God requires that our worship offerings be a "first fruit" of what God has given us. It is not acceptable to God to get your paycheck, pay all the bills, take out some money to go eat or go to the movies, put some in the savings account, and then if there is any left over to give God a portion of that.

It doesn't matter if you are a millionaire and you give \$50,000 per week. If that is how you give, it is unacceptable. You must give the first fruits. In order to do this you will have to make a conscious decision about what percent you will give. You cannot wait to see what is left over and give some of that.

You see, it is not about the amount that you give. It is about the percent that you give.

Remember the widow's mite? All these people were giving silver, gold, and expensive things. She came and gave less than a penny but Jesus said that her offering was greater than all the others because she gave all she had.

Let's look at an example. There is a man who makes \$10,000 per week and tithes \$500 per week. That is 5%. There is another person that makes \$100 and tithes \$20 per week. That is 20%.

In this situation, the man giving \$20 is giving a greater offering to God than the man who give \$500.

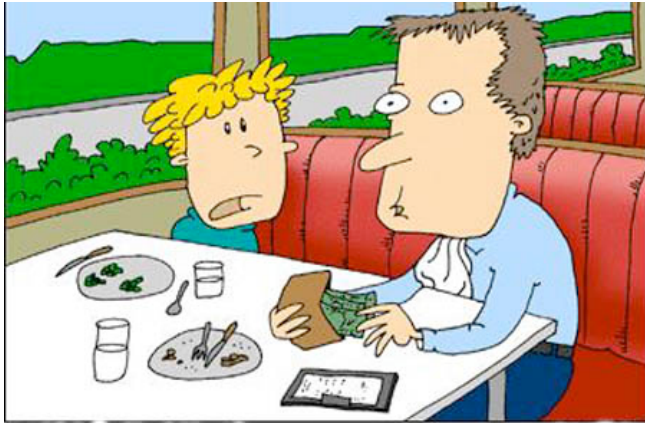
So, there is no hard and fast law about a 10% tithe in the New Testament, but the amount that you give is not what makes your offering big or small. It is the percent that you give. Since God does not accept "left-over" offerings, you have to decide before hand what percent you will give to God. Throughout the Old Testament, the correct offering was 10% so that is where I start.

You can't just arbitrarily say, "we will give this much." You must decide what first fruit you will give. Paul said we are to give, "As God has prospered him..."

Principle #7 - Where should I give?

Paul says that our offerings should be made “in store” (v. 2). Many people simply set aside a percent of their tithe and hold it for upcoming events or needs. Paul tells the Corinthians that they should give on the first day

of the week and lay it up in store. This word “store” in Greek is where we get the word thesaurus from. It means “treasury.” Paul is telling them to take a collection and keep it in the assembly’s communal treasury. This is confirmed by the fact that Paul tells them to do this so “that there be no gatherings when I come” (v. 2).



HOW COME THE WAITRESS GETS 15% AND GOD ONLY GETS 10%?

Principle #8 - Under who's Care should I give?

The answer is simple. “Whomsoever you approve...” (v. 3). Paul told them to pick men under whom they would entrust their giving. God has ordained the office of “Pastor” in the local church. The Pastor guides and shepherds the flock as the Lord leads. You don’t need to go through a Pastor to speak to God, but the office is placed in the church to have someone to guide you scripturally through your specific circumstances.

Charles Stanley or Adrian Rogers can give you a scriptural truth, but he can’t apply it to you as an individual in your specific situation. He doesn’t know you. Every believer needs someone they call, “Pastor.” However, Scripture allows you to choose whose authority you will be under. If you don’t trust the individual who is in charge of stewarding your tithes, then you should find someone you do trust. The Bible clearly tells us that submitting to a Pastor is beneficial to you.



“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for *that is unprofitable for you.*” - Hebrews 13:17

Here at Christ Church, my family and I have placed ourselves under the leadership of Eddie Martin. Over the course of many years, He has proven himself a capable, Spirit-led leader, who is worthy of our trust.

The three reasons why we choose to give under his care probably apply to you as well.

1. The office is given and ordained by God.
2. Pastor Martin has consistently made his decisions based on biblical principles and the leading of God.
3. Through love and care, Pastor Martin has earned to right to lead us.

Giving is Worship

GIVING BACK TO THE ONE WHO FIRST GAVE



Study Questions

1. In your mind, think about what percentage you give God from what He has given you. What does this say about your thankfulness and trust in Him?

2. Have you planned to give a certain percentage to God, or do you give Him what is left over from your increase?

3. If you are unable to tithe and still have enough money to live, does that reflect badly on God's faithfulness or on your own management of your resources?

4. Do you think it is important to have a place to congregate in worship and praise, a place to train our children in godliness, and proclaim the Word of God? Does your giving reflect your belief?

5. Jesus said, "Where you treasure is, there your heart will be also..." If someone looked at your finances, what would they say is most important in your life? If you don't know where you spend the most, what does that say about your stewardship of what God has given you?

6. Regardless of where you are at in tithing, remember that the gospel is our peace and joy. We give because He has given, not in order to get more.
