

THE JOY OF GIVING

A man had a heart attack and was rushed to the hospital. He could receive little company and was not to be excited. While in the hospital a rich uncle died and left him a million dollars. His family wondered how to break the news to him with the least amount of excitement. It was decided to ask the pastor if he would go and break the news quietly to the man. The pastor went, and gradually led up to the question. The pastor asked the patient what he would do if he inherited a million dollars. He said, "I think I would give it all to the church." The pastor wound up in the bed beside him, recovering from a heart attack himself.

Today we are starting a new series on giving. Over the next couple of weeks we want to look at what God says about giving, and also tell you about some exciting new opportunities and apps to help you in your giving. We are doing this series on giving because it is an important subject. The Bible has a lot to say about money. In Matthew, Mark, and Luke 1 of 6 verses deals with money. Of the 29 parables Christ told, 16 deal with a person and their money.

As a church, when we speak about giving we often talk about tithing. So what does it mean to tithe. The word tithe means a tenth. Today I just want to start by describing what tithing is. In the Old Testament God asked that everyone give back to Him a tenth of their income.

Leviticus 27:30 A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD.

Why did God ask this? What was it used for? The tithe was used to support the priests. It was God's way of supporting those who worked at the temple.

Numbers 18:20-21 The LORD said to Aaron, "You will have no inheritance in their land, nor will you have any share among them; I am your share and your inheritance among the Israelites. 21 I give to the Levites all the tithes in Israel as their inheritance in return for the work they do while serving at the Tent of Meeting.

Why did God ask the nation of Israel to do this? Was it just about supporting the Levites? Does God need our money? Not really...

Psalms 50:9-11 I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens, 10 for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. 11 I know every bird in the mountains, and the creatures of the field are mine.

While the tithe went to support the priesthood, the act of tithing was much more than just a practical way of supporting them. The focus of tithing is not on where the money goes, the focus of tithing is on the person who gives it. The tithe was God's way of regularly reminding us that everything we have belongs to Him.

Deuteronomy 14:22-23 Be sure to set aside a tenth of all that your fields produce each year. 23 Eat the tithe of your grain, new wine and oil, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks in the presence of the LORD your God at the place he will choose as a dwelling for his Name, *so that you may learn to revere the LORD your God always.*

In the Old Testament God gave many laws that applied to Israel as a nation. There were dietary laws to help them to stay healthy. There were civil laws to help maintain law and order. There were ceremonial laws and religious festivals to help bind them together as a nation.

Tithing did not fit into these categories. It was given, much like the principle of the Sabbath, to be a constant reminder of our need and to combat self-reliance.

Deuteronomy 8:17-18 You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." 18 But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today.

It was God's way of reminding us of the truth of Psalm 24 which says;

Psalms 24:1 The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it;

Tithing was an important principle in the Old testament, something that God took very seriously. So seriously in fact that it is the only area in our lives where we are permitted to put God to the test, to see the cause and effect relationship that tithing has.

Malachi 3:8-10 Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. But you ask, 'How do we rob you?' "In tithes and offerings. 9 You are under a curse--the whole nation of you--because you are robbing me. 10 Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.

You may be thinking at this point OK, so tithing was something that they did in the Old Testament, but so what? Many people believe that tithing, as an Old Testament law, is something that does not apply to the church today. Should Christians tithe today?

In the bible there are precepts, principles and preferences. The precept is the command. The principle is the underlying truth behind the command that must be applied and the preference is the personal application of the principle. I would argue that the precept of tithing is based on the underlying principle of recognizing God as provider. Like the Sabbath, it is based on an underlying principle that is as relevant today as it was 4000 years ago. Additionally, the invitation to test God given in Malachi is something that is as true today as it was when it was written.

What did Jesus say about tithing? We see him address this issue in Matthew 23

Matthew 23:23 Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices--mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law -- justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former.

While the main focus of his discussion with the Pharisees is about their hypocrisy, we clearly see here that Jesus tells them that that should be tithing, that it is something that should be practiced. If Jesus tells them they should be tithing, it must have been something He was practicing himself.

The Apostle Paul connected Old Testament tithing and the modern practice of giving to the church.

1 Corinthians 9:13-14 Don't you know that those who work in the temple get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? 14 *In the same way*, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.

Paul is saying here that the pastors today are supported in the church the same way that the priests in the Old testament were supported in the temple, through the giving of the people. Through tithes.

Today I want us to briefly look at a New testament passage that talks about giving.

2 Cor 9:6 Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. 7 Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. 9 As it is written: "He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." 10 Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. 11 You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. 12 This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. 13 Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. 14 And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. 15 Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

1. Giving is Rooted in God's Love (vs. 6-7) –

It says here in verse 7 that people should give, not because they have to but because they want to, because God loves a cheerful giver. Again, the purpose of giving is to remind us of God's love. We give to God out of the abundance He has given to us. Giving is a recognition of God's faithfulness, a celebration of His provision for us. Our giving is rooted in the fact that all we have has been given to us from God. Our giving therefore is an expression of our thanks and is part of our worship.

E.g. Pastor BW in Kuwait - "It's hallelujah time!"

You can give without loving, but you can't love without giving. What we do for the Lord flows out of our love for him. It is an extension of our worship.

What sometimes turns people off giving is the idea that tithing is just a command, something we have to do. Again, God asks us to do this not only out duty but out of love. In the Old testament, there were not only tithes but there were offerings. Offerings were things that people gave freely beyond the tithe just to show their love for God. In the New Testament we also see offerings. That is why we talk about both tithes and offerings in the church. The tithe is just the beginning.

Rom 12:1 So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life -- your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life -- and place it before God as an offering. (MSG)

The word "offer" is the essence of worship. We offer our lives to God. There is no other area of life where this is so concrete as in the area of giving. It is where the rubber meets the road.

Rick Warren in the purpose driven life said "Did you know that your checkbook and your calendar (day timer) are theological documents? Without even knowing you, if you were to show me your checkbook stubs and you were to show me your schedule, I could tell you right now what you love, because the way you spend your time and the way you spend your money shows what you love the most."

2. Giving Releases God's Blessings (vs. 8-11) –

It says in verse 10 that he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed. The Bible is clear that when we give we also receive back from the Lord. We see this in both the Old and New Testament. Obedience leads to blessings. We have already read Malachi 3;

Mal 3:10 Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.

Luke 6:38 Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

Studies have shown that most church goers in North America give about 1.5 to 2.5 percent of their income to the church. If we really believe what it says in Malachi 3, this means that a lot of people are missing out on God's blessings when it comes to their finances.

Captain Levy, was once asked how he could give so much to the Lord's work and still be so wealthy. He replied, "Oh, as I shovel it out, He shovels it in, and the Lord has a bigger shovel."

Recently the magazine Christianity Today had an article about a movement called the 90 day challenge that is happening in North America. Different churches have asked people to sign up with a commitment to give 10 percent of their income or more (tithe), and if "God doesn't hold true to his promises of blessings" after three months, they can request their money back, no questions asked. It's the church's version of "satisfaction guaranteed." They do this based on the promise given in Malachi 3.

One church that participated was NewSpring Church in Anderson South Carolina. Their pastor preached a message saying "God literally says, 'Test me out, see if I'm God,' You and I cannot out-give him." More than 7000 participants took the challenge and less than 20 asked for their money back – that is about a quarter of 1%. When asked why the church had taken this challenge the pastor said "Tithing is about being obedient, putting God first in our finances and training our hearts to trust him at his word. It is one of the hardest next steps for many people to take, and the 90-day tithe challenge is one way we can help people with that step." Hundreds of other churches in North America have also given this challenge and have found about the same result, less than 1% ask for their money back.

No one has ever become poor by giving -- Anne Frank

3. Giving Results in God's Kingdom Advancing (vs. 12-15) –

This passage says that when we give "men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ". Giving is evangelistic – it proves our faith and results in God's kingdom moving forward.

A pastor stood before his church and said, "I've got some good news and some bad news. The good news is that the church has all the money it needs... The bad news is that it's all still in your wallets."

We have talked about why we give and the fruit of giving, but I want to end today by talking about HOW to give. One of the challenges that many churches are having these days is giving people the opportunity to give. Those of us who are a little older still use checks. Many in the younger generation do not really use checks, and they never carry cash. As a church we want to make giving as easy as possible for everyone. There are many ways to give;

One way to give is during the service. When the offering plate is passed around you can put your money (either cash or a check) into an envelope. Make sure to write down your name and address so that the church can issue you a tax receipt. This will allow you to get money back on your tax return so that you can give even more!

Another way to give is through automatic withdrawal directly from your bank account. You can go onto our website and click on the giving link at the top and you can download the automatic withdrawal form at the bottom of the page. Fill it out and return it to the church office along with a VOID check and the church will set that up for you.

In the pew pocket in front of you maybe you noticed this morning a new green card. Go ahead and take that card out and look at it.

Another way to give is online through our church website. Again, go to the BBC website giving page and simply click on the link 'Bramalea Baptist Church Online Giving' and you will be directed to a secure page to give online.

Another way to give is through our new smart phone app. You can download the app called tithe.ly from Google Play or the Apple App Store and install it on your phone. Once you set up a secure account you simply find Bramalea Baptist Church and then choose the amount to give. Watch this video;

One of the easiest ways to give is our new text giving option. You simply text the word give to the number on the screen (647) 360-2445. Follow the instructions to set up your account. Then you simple text the amount you want to give to that number. Watch this video for more information;

Tony Campolo tells of being invited to speak at a ladies meeting. There were 300 women there. Before he spoke the president of the organization read a letter from a missionary. It was a very moving letter. In the letter the missionary expressed a need for \$2,000 to take care of an emergency that had cropped up. So the president of the organization said, "We need to pray that God will provide the resources to meet the need of this missionary. Bro. Campolo will you please pray for us?" Tony Campolo, who is very outspoken said, "No." Startled, she said, "I beg your pardon." He said, "No, I won't pray for that." He said, "I believe that God has already provided the resources & that all we need to do is give. Tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to step up to this table & give every bit of cash I have in my pocket. And if all of you will do the same thing, I think God has already provided the resources." The president of the organization chuckled a little bit & said, "Well, I guess we get the point. He is trying to teach us that we all need to give sacrificially." He said, "No, that is not what I am trying to teach you. I'm trying to teach you that God has already provided for this missionary. All we need to do is give it. Here, I'm going to put down all of my money I have with me." He wrote, "I only had \$15 in my pocket so I wasn't too worried about that." So he put down his \$15 & then looked at the president of the organization. Reluctantly, she opened her purse & took out all of her money, which was about \$40, & put it on the table. One by one the rest of the ladies filed by & put their money on the table, too. When the money was counted they had collected more than \$2,000." Tony Campolo said, "Now, here's the lesson. God always supplies for our needs, & he supplied for this missionary, too. The only problem was we were keeping it for ourselves. Now let's pray & thank God for His provision."