



## GIVING THE TITHE

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We've been talking about giving. There are three kinds of givers—the flint, the sponge, and the honeycomb. To get anything out of the flint you must hammer it, and then you get only chips and sparks.

To get water out of a sponge you must squeeze it, and the more you squeeze, the more you get. But the honeycomb just overflows with its own sweetness. Which kind of giver are you?

Giving with glad and generous hearts has a way of rooting out the old miser in us. Just the act of letting go of money, or some other treasure, helps destroy the greed demon within us.

Let's talk about the tithe and the needs of the church. It's important to understand the tithe. It is especially important that young people and young adults understand it. When we get serious about stewardship—serving and giving, the tithe is...

### 1. The starting point

The first step is tithing. The word 'tithe' comes from an old English term simply meaning a tenth. It is giving 10% of our income back to God.

Here at Del Norte Baptist we practice tithing for the support of Christ's Body, the church, as God commands. It is God's plan for funding His world-wide enterprise and for developing us to be more like Christ.

The Old Testament teaches that the tithe is the starting place. The New Testament teaches proportional, "as you are blessed" giving. In the New Testament there is not a specific commandment to tithe.

Jesus validated the tithe when he commended the scribes and Pharisees for their obedience to tithe (Matt. 23:23). And every New Testament example of giving goes far beyond the tithe.

The book of Malachi is a collection of sermons by Malachi confronting the people for violating

God's holiness. One of those things was that the people had stopped obeying the law of the tithe in the Old Testament.

It's important to see what God said to them: Malachi 3:8 - 9 (NIV) 8"Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. "But you ask, 'How do we rob you?' "In tithes and offerings. 9You are under a curse—the whole nation of you—because you are robbing me.

### (1) When you tithe you exalt God (Will you rob God? v. 8)

When we tithe we express God's preeminence in our life. The Israelites were making a mockery of their worship of God; they were not giving their best to God (1:8).

God wants our giving to be a deeply meaningful expression of worship. God wants our giving to be an expression of appreciation for all the ways He has blessed us.

God wants our giving to recognize that He is first in our lives. Tithing with an attitude of thanksgiving pleases and exalts God.

### (2) When you tithe you are trusting God (Test God. v. 10)

Malachi 3:10 (NIV) 10Bring 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.

God sees giving as a test of faith. "If you will do this I will prove to you that you will never have to be in debt to me." This is the only place in the Bible where God tells us to test Him, to prove Him.

It's really a dare. He dares you to trust that He will take care of you as you put Him first with your finances. "Will you trust me?" He asks. When you tithe you are embracing God's promise.

I'm flabbergasted when I read stats that Christians only give about 2%, and that Christians during the great depression gave more per capita than Christians today.

I'm amazed that so many are willing to trust God for their eternal salvation but won't trust Him enough to tithe. We'll give 15-20% to the waiter in the restaurant, but balk at giving God 10%.

He invites us to try Him. "Well, we will as soon as our bills are paid down; sis needs braces; we're saving for vacation..." That's not putting God first, or believing Him or trusting Him.

There's always going to be things that are going to come up that will seem more important.

The best way to get your priorities in order is to begin to tithe. God will honor and bless your efforts to be obedient to Him. Give God the 10%; He will give the wisdom to better use the rest.

(3) Tithing releases you from material tyranny.

When you hang on to your possessions they own you. Tithing releases you from the tyranny of materialism and clears the channel for God's abundant blessings. Spiritual blessings are incomparably superior to material ones.

When you cheerfully give the tithe to God you receive an abundance of joy and peace.

It's one thing to claim we love God, but the Bible says our giving "tests the sincerity of our love" (2 Cor. 8:8). The way you spend your time and money reveals what is really important to you.

(4) When you tithe you acknowledge God as the Source.

Psalms 24:1 (NIV) The earth is the LORD'S, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.

The interesting thing about tithing is that it is more than mere giving. It is being stewards of what God entrusts to us. It is acknowledging that everything, us included, belongs to God.

If we were simply giving it would imply that the responsibility for the gift is because of our own efforts. This is a selfish spirit, wanting to impress others that we are in charge of our faith and our possessions.

Giving the tithe in the biblical way truly glorifies God. This is why tithing should always be an act of worship.

1 Chronicles 16:29 (NIV) Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name. Bring an offering and come before him; worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness.

(5) When you tithe you are putting God first.

Proverbs 3:9 (NIV) Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops;

Tithing is a real test of where God is in your life. When we say, "Well, if there's anything left I'll give to God," what are you saying? Just that God isn't first in your life.

When budgets stretch unmanageably or a crisis depletes the paycheck, or when vacation money is needed, many Christians skimp or forego their tithe to cover a personal deficit.

But if you want to truly honor and glorify God with all that He's blessed you with, by giving 10% you demonstrate your priorities and show your trust that God will provide all your needs.

## 2. Renting vs. Owning

I said I wanted to talk a little about tithing and about the needs of the church. Think about the difference between renting a home and owning a home. Luaine and I have done both—in fact

during our 40 years, when not renting, we have owned 6 homes.

There's not a whole lot of difference in writing a check for the mortgage or the rent because both involve a debit in your checking account.

The difference between renting and owning is when something breaks. When you rent you call the owner and expect him to fix the problem and assume the financial responsibility.

When you own and something breaks you are the one who makes six trips to Home Depot in one day attempting to fix something you have no experience fixing. When you are a home owner, every payment paid, every repair made is an investment in your home.

Home ownership can be a real adventure. My question for you is, are you an owner of your church or simply a renter?

For instance, when a furnace goes out, if you have a renter's mindset, you expect someone else to fix it and assume financial responsibility for it. A renter's mentality expects the expenses of running a church to be paid by someone else.

Or, when something breaks emotionally—your feelings got hurt, the pastor didn't say hi in the hallway—renters are quick to bail out and find a new church and new relationships instead of repairing the broken one.

The question is, are you a renter or an owner of Del Norte Baptist? We need to be honest that too many people approach church from a renter's mentality—someone else will assume responsibility.

Tithers have an owner's mentality. Tithers understand the church is the biblical storehouse, the foundation of our missions and ministries. Tithers know that the facilities don't just repair themselves.

God said to bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, which today is the general budget of the church. Out of the church we do ministries. Out of the church we support missionaries around the world.

You say, "My tithe goes to my Sunday School class' special ministry." Or, "I give my tithe to Joy Junction or to Campus Crusades for Christ, or to the TV evangelist." Those are worthy causes, but they are not the storehouse—the church is.

Let me tell you an old story I read about a lighthouse keeper before lighthouses became automated. This keeper worked on a rocky stretch of coastline, and he received his new supply of oil once a month to keep the lighthouse burning.

One night a woman from the village begged some oil to keep her family warm. Another time a

father asked for some to use in his lamp. Another needed some to lubricate a wheel. Since all the requests seemed legitimate, the keeper tried to please everyone and grant their requests.

Toward the end of the month his supply of oil was gone and the lighthouse beacon went out. That night several ships were wrecked and lives were lost.

When the authorities investigated, the keeper was very repentant. To his excuses and pleading their reply was, "You were given oil for one purpose—to keep the light burning!"

We have been given our church for one purpose—to keep the light of Jesus Christ burning. If we all decide to give our tithe to every good cause except the storehouse, the church, eventually Del Norte will cease to exist.

Then we will no longer be helping to support 10,000 missionaries around the world. Tithers understand that the 10% has to come to the church.

Radio and TV preachers are not the storehouse; the various collections in SS classes are not the storehouse; the Lottie Moon and Annie Armstrong offering is not the storehouse. The church is.

Over my years as a pastor I've noticed some things about tithers. Tithers don't complain about how much money it takes to run a church. Non tithers gripe about everything.

Tithers are more concerned that they do not do more. Tithers don't quit because their feelings were hurt. Non-tithers are always church shopping.

Tithers are joyful and thankful for their salvation. Non-tithers seem to have lost track of what God did for them.

I've also noticed that those who feel that we talk about money too much are not tithers. Generous people enjoy talking about what God's Word says about it. There is a direct connection between a person's faith and their generosity.

Those who give generously tend to become more faithful. The reverse is generally true concerning those who do not tithe—they are the least faithful, and the quickest to leave.

## Application:

The Bible teaches that God wants our giving to be a deeply meaningful expression of worship. First, our giving expresses our gratitude for all the ways God has blessed in the past. Second, our giving expresses our priorities in the present. The way we spend our time and money reveals what's really important to us. And third, God sees our giving as a test of our faith. Many people are willing to trust God for their eternal salvation but won't trust Him enough to tithe.

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