

Giving at New Crossing Church

You know that churches, like any other nonprofit organization, need money to keep running. But what does God say in the Bible about giving? A good place to start is with God's reminder that the earth and everything in it (including you) belongs to Him¹.

How should you give to God? It's what is in your heart that God is concerned about and not what is in the offering basket². God calls us to be generous givers and that means we need to put a little faith in Him. You can trust God to take care of your needs. But He also calls you to be cheerful about your giving. He doesn't want you to give out of some weird religious obligation or guilt. Your giving should be a reflection of your relationship with God. It has spiritual and practical implications in your relationship with God and the running of His church.

Where does the idea of tithing 10% come from? In the Old Testament God commanded His people to give back to Him 10% of everything they had³. This was then used by the Levites to run the temple and perform the worship services for the nation. Traditionally some churches have used this number as a basis for their own giving.

Weren't offerings and tithes introduced as part of the Levitical law?

No. Offerings were made to God at the very beginning with Cain and Abel⁴. Tithing was practiced 400 years before God even gave the commandment to Israel. Abraham "tithed" to the Lord through the priest Melchizedek and his son Jacob continued the practice⁵.

What is the purpose of tithes and offerings?

Primarily it seems that giving is an outward reflection of one's heart and attitude. You can see an attitude of gratitude in Abraham and dependence in Jacob. Tithing was to be a practice of prioritizing God in life, and of recognizing that He is the source of their income⁶. It also served a practical purpose of providing for the priests and Levites so that they could be freed up to maintain the temple and serve God and the people. God commanded the people to tithe primarily as an important part of their worship of Him, not just to raise money for operations. Even the Levites were to take 10% of their income received from Israel and present this as an offering to the Lord.

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

² 2 Corinthians 9:6-8 Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 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.

³ Leviticus 27:30-32 "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. . . . The entire tithe of the herd and flock --every tenth animal that passes under the shepherd's rod --will be holy to the LORD."

⁴ Genesis 4:3-4 Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock.

⁵ Genesis. 14:20 "And blessed be God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand."

Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.

Genesis. 28:20-22 Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear so that I return safely to my father's house, then the LORD will be my God and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth."

⁶ Deuteronomy 14:22-23 Be sure to set aside a tenth of all that your fields produce each year. 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.

What is the difference between tithes and offerings?

Tithing was a starting point in one's giving. God commanded that they give 10% on a regular basis. But Israel also had opportunities to give freely above and beyond their normal giving. These were called freewill offerings and they were given to express fellowship with God, to help the poor, or to rebuild the temple after it had been destroyed.

If you were to follow the Old Testament model without getting legalistic you might do the following:

- Like the Israelites you would give from the first fruits of your labor. It is the first check you write to God when you receive your paycheck, not the last.
- To tithe would mean you give of your income on a regular basis.
- You may also give above your regular giving as an additional expression of praise or to help meet some special needs. This would be called an offering.

How important is this to God?

When the people stopped bringing their whole tithe to the temple, God cursed them. It was more than neglect of a commandment (which is serious enough), but God said they were robbing Him personally⁷. He challenged them to test Him and see if he would greatly bless them and take care of their needs.

What does Jesus say about tithing and giving? Jesus condemns the Pharisees for being hypocrites. They give their tithes but neglect the more important matters of the law - justice, mercy, and faithfulness. Jesus said they should practice the latter, without neglecting the former. While in the temple Jesus pointed out to his disciples that the poor widow gave more than all the others, even though the amount was much less⁸. How was that possible? Because she gave sacrificially. It is important to note that she had two coins and could have given one of them (which would have been 50% of all she had to live on), but she gave both coins to God. Like the Old Testament it is primarily your heart and attitude that is important to God and yet you are not to neglect the practice of giving. Like other Old Testament practices Jesus takes an external practice and internalizes the spiritual significance. God does not care about the amount you give, but that you give and how you give.

What should you do? You should bring it before God in prayer. Only God can tell you in your heart how much you should be giving⁹. This is between you and Him. New Testament scripture does not dictate a new set of regulations.

Whatever you do, your giving should reveal two things: Your dependence on God by giving to Him with faith, and your gratitude to Him by being generous in your giving. God does not wish you to give out of guilt or compulsion, but out of good cheer.

God bless you,

The Elder Board

⁷ 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. You are under a curse --the whole nation of you --because you are robbing me. 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.

⁸ Mark 12:41-44 Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything --all she had to live on."

⁹ 2 Corinthians 9:6-7 Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.