

Stewardship Under the Cross Overcoming the Fear of Tithing

Your heart will always go where you put God's money.

Jesus said that where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. As the hymn verse has it: "We give Thee but Thine own." God is the ultimate giver of our incomes: all these gifts come from him. To acknowledge this gift and our dependence on the Lord, God calls us to give a portion of our income back to Him for the maintenance of His Church. Indeed, the Scriptures are very clear: God calls His people to give generously to the work of the Church. As we have seen, God commanded Israel to support the Word and Sacrament ministry of the Levites in the Temple with a tithe (10%) of their income. Can we call ourselves generous by doing less?

This calls for faith. Do we trust God's Word? Do we trust that what He says is for our benefit, not our harm? **If you have never tithed before, it can be a scary proposition.** Give 10% of my income away!? You've got to be kidding. But God doesn't ever kid us in His Word. Instead, He tells us how to live holy and blessed lives full of peace and contentment. Consider these Scriptures:

Jesus said, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also (Matthew 6:19-21).

"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" (Malachi 3:8-10) .

On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as each one of you may prosper (1 Cor. 16:2) .

But just as you excel in everything-- in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us --see that you also excel in this grace of giving (2 Corinthians 8:7) .

The point is this: he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that you may always have enough of everything and may provide in abundance for every good work (2 Cor. 9:6-8) .

We do not make God poor when we fail to give money to Him properly, but we do make ourselves poor if we do not give according to the standards He sets for us in His Word, the Bible. God does not need our money, but we need to give the way the Bible tells us to in order to overcome the negative influence money and the things of this world can have on us.

God will never tell us to do something that will be to our harm – He loves us too much for that. Jesus gave His life on the cross for me. He loves me and knows what is best for me – so I can know that what He says about stewardship is meant for my benefit. He wants my heart to be with Him – and my heart will always follow where I put God's money. **Tithing is not easy:**

it is godly. It will change your life. Stepping out in faith always does. You may have to change your lifestyle to accommodate following God's Word in this matter. But tithing will change your life in other ways too: it will give you a peace and contentment that can only come from actually putting yourself in the hands of the Lord.

So read through those Scriptures again. Pray through the questions below. And step out in faith this year with giving that is in accord with God's Word. And just see if you are not blessed in it.

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| Y | N | The Lord loves me and gave Himself for me on the cross. |
| Y | N | All that I have comes from the Lord. |
| Y | N | The Lord blessed me to live in the richest land in the world. |
| Y | N | If I had to start living on 90% of my current income tomorrow, I or someone in my family would starve. |
| Y | N | I / We have been making first-fruit, regular, proportionate and generous (at least 10%, a tithe) money offerings to the Lord from the heart. |
| Y | N | If "Yes", the Lord gets all the glory for that. |
| Y | N | If "No", the Lord wants me to change the way I make money offerings to him. |
| Y | N | If the Lord wants me to change, I should change now, not later. |
| Y | N | It is the power of the Holy Spirit and the love of Jesus Christ that changes me for the better. |