



GIVING  
*God Owns it All*

Offering Our Lives To Reach A Community



THE SANCTUARY

# GIVING AT THE SANCTUARY

## *Offering Our Lives To Reach A Community*

To begin, I would like to answer the question I asked myself numerous times in approaching this writing: Why publish a reader about money and giving when the Bible has already said so much about it?" There are many subjects God speaks about in each book of the Bible. But when it comes to finances, God directly brings up the issue more than 2,000 times. That's at least four times more than prayer or even faith! Money and possessions seem to be major themes throughout the Bible. I believe God makes so many statements about money to man because man has so many issues about money with God. The stewardship and use of financial resources has always been and will always be a primary source of dialogue in the Church and with the Creator. As always at the heart of the issue is one's heart in the issue. Hopefully this reader will get to the heart of the matter.

### **GOD'S MOTIVATIONS**

Naturally, as in all of His instructions, God is attempting to change the way we think. With money and possessions; it's changing our attitude from ownership to stewardship; from thinking that what we have is all ours, to knowing that what we have is ALL His. The following conversation can be very fruitful if we can agree on this point from 1 Chronicles 29:11, "Everything in the heavens and on earth is yours, O Lord, and this is your kingdom. We adore you as the one who is over all things." Essentially, God owns it all—we are simply stewards.

First, let's get some essential vocabulary for this reading. The term "tithe" is defined in the Bible as a tenth: corresponding to the giving of 10% of one's income; produce, property or finances for a given purpose. It is also referred to as "first fruits". It is important here to note that the tithe comes at the beginning. It comes from the top, not scraped off the bottom of whatever is left. It's what is done first as a priority, not resigned to last as a reluctant duty. Second, we will need to understand a very brief biblical overview and history on giving back to God a portion of our resources.

Starting in the Old Testament, Abraham **initiated** tithing (Genesis 14:18-20). He gave Melchizedek—a priest/king and representation of Christ (Hebrews 7:1) an offering of a tithe or tenth of all he possessed. God then **established** this practice by putting it into the Levitical law written through Moses (Leviticus 27:30). The prophet Malachi strongly **reinforced** the subject of tithing; and along with His exhortation, gave the ultimate challenge to continue this pattern of giving (Malachi 3:8-12). Moving into the

New Testament Jesus **confirmed** tithing along with a stern reminder to not forget the more important giving issues of justice, mercy and faith (Matthew 23:23). Lastly, the apostle Paul **maintained** and **encouraged** the practice of giving “a portion of the money you have earned” as an investment into the future of the Church (1 Corinthians 16:2).

What is important to note in this brief historical summary is that Christ did not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it (Matthew 5:17). In other words, the rules and regulations God established in the Old Testament were simply a “tutor leading us to Christ” (Galatians 3:24); and in Christ all aspects of the law are completed. What was once a requirement of the law is now practiced as evidence of our newness in the Spirit. Tithing is only a part of our new life in Christ; although it is not based on regulation, it is an additional component of celebrating our new found freedom.

Throughout the Bible, God reveals that a person’s heart is His priority. Jesus directly addresses our “heart condition” and it’s relation to our “things” when he stated, “Wherever your treasure is, there your heart and thoughts will also be” (Matthew 6:21). God wants to make sure our hearts are in the right place.

There is nothing wrong with money in and of itself. Very simply put – money is what money is. It has been inaccurately taught for years that “money is the root of all evil”, when in fact the Bible actually says “The **love** of money is the root of all kinds of evil” (1 Timothy 6:10). That same scripture goes on to say, “And some people, craving money, have wandered from the true faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows.” We can see clearly it’s what we do with money and its position in our lives that really matters.

*“Money can be converted into eternal treasure. It can be changed into food for the hungry, and clothing for the poor; it can keep missionaries actively winning the lost to the light of the gospel [the Good News of salvation through Jesus Christ] and, thus, transform itself into heavenly values”*  
[A.W. Tozer]

God is attempting to partner with us. He is trying to get us to think more heavenly minded. It is so easy to focus on earthly needs, but we are instructed not to. “He will give you all you need from day to day if you make the Kingdom of God your primary concern” (Luke 12:31).

## **GIVING IS THE PATTERN FOR OUR LIVES**

Giving is the subject of the most popularly quoted scripture in the Bible! “For God loved the world so much that he **gave** his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16) (emphasis obviously mine) Because God is a giver, Jesus is a giver (2 Corinthians 8:9). We can then naturally

conclude that for us to be like Christ is for us to be givers also. God is not talking about just any kind of givers; but cheerful, generous ones (2 Corinthians 9:6-7). God wants us to receive the blessings that accompany giving (Acts 20:35). He wants us to be wise in our investment into His Kingdom; not blindly giving without proper oversight as good stewardship necessitates. (Matthew 25:14-30)

The real problem is, when we cease to follow the instructions given to us in the Bible regarding giving, we are not the only ones who are affected.

First, the consequence is personal; our individual resources are affected. The Bible is clear. God will protect our resources and bless us when we give back Him. (Malachi 3:10). Martin Luther said, "I have held many things in my hands and I have lost them all. But whatever I have placed in God's hands, that I still possess." That which is given to God is safe from moth and rust (Matthew 6:20). God can be trusted to keep His promises (Hebrews 10:23).

Second, the community of the church (local) is affected. Our provision is conditioned upon our giving to the needy. "Whoever gives to the poor will lack nothing. But a curse will come upon those who close their eyes to poverty" (Proverbs 28:27). God specifically chose the ministry of the church to further the Good News. "As a result of your ministry, they (the church) will give glory to God. Your generosity to them and to all believers will prove that you are obedient to the Good News of Christ" (2 Corinthians 9:13). When we take care of others, we will be taken care of as well (Proverbs 11:25-26). Seeking to take care of ourselves first, is simply backwards thinking.

And finally, the Church (global) experiences unnecessary distress. Our right and responsibility as Christians is to advance the Kingdom of God here on earth as it is in Heaven. We, in effect, stop that progress (or at best, hinder the work) when we withhold the blessing God designed to be given **through** us by making the false assumption he was trying to give the blessing **to** us (1 Corinthians 15:1-2; 2 Corinthians 9:8). God's Kingdom suffers from lack of giving, when He has already provided what needs to be given. We are to be a channel for blessing not merely a bucket for collecting it. If giving is merely to a local church, a ministry, or a needy person, that would be considered charity. When gifts are given to the Lord, they become an act of worship. Therefore, if our pattern of worship does not include regular tithing, we are cheating God of what is His, and we are cheating ourselves of the fullness of the Christian walk. Ultimately this is what God wants from His children, that we would worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:24).

As with all His principles, God's conditions to bless, multiply, and protect our resources when we tithe are reciprocal: hinging on our faithfulness (If you do this- I will do this, see Deuteronomy 30). Partial faithfulness isn't really faithfulness at all. "Mostly faithful" is a contradiction in terms! Imagine if a spouse were to say, "Aren't you glad I'm mostly faithful to you." How would we respond? Or what would happen if we were to be

mostly on time with our commitments, financial or otherwise? What if I had most of the money to cover all the financial commitments I've made? Faithfulness doesn't work that way. Part-time consistency isn't consistent at all. If I showed up to work most of the week can I still get paid for the whole week? God is looking for full-time faithfulness from His children.

When we come to fellowship we need to come prepared with provisions for the "whole church" (local and global). "On every Lord's Day, each of you should put aside some amount of money in relation to what you have earned and save it for this offering" (1 Corinthians 16:2). The Church is not a restaurant where we look at a menu, pick and choose what we want, and pay according only to what we ordered. Although this commodity mindset exists culturally, the local church is counter-culture and supposed to function more like a family reunion pot-luck. Each person and family brings provisions according to their family size and it's all placed on the table to be shared with everyone.

This "pot-luck" idea started with God (1 Corinthians 12:10-14). If each of us would spend some time in our spiritual "kitchen" prior to fellowship, preparing some sort of nourishment for the fellowship we are about to enter, we would find fewer people walking away from church services still hungry. Each person brings their share and there's enough to share.

There is an entitlement mentality—which has permeated the Church—and is actually defiling our fellowship. We must learn and understand that empowering one another to ministry (financially, etc.) gets more done, and gets us that much closer to the goal of Kingdom living. When we all share-n-shoulder the burden of furthering the Good News, the load is lighter, and more gets done!

God established the gracious beauty of tithing so everyone can do it! It takes faith, but everyone can participate because everyone has ten percent. If I have \$10, I have a tithe. If I have \$100, I have a tithe. If I have \$1,000, I have a tithe, and so on. God meant it when He told us to teach our children His ways (Proverbs 22:6; Deuteronomy 6:7). The principle of tithing is designed to be taught, even to our very young children. If they have a \$1.00 ... you guessed it, they have ten percent to give.

Some of us have struggled with the principle of tithing, perhaps because we were raised with a mindset of scarcity, where "there isn't enough to go around, so I better clutch to what I have." Continuing with this kind of poverty thinking only saddles our children with the idea that God is satisfied with partial faithfulness when justified with fear. It's sobering to realize that our children will become as we have trained them to be (Luke 6:40). We can teach what we know, but we reproduce who we are. So let's show them the right way!

## SUPPORTING THE MINISTRY

Throughout its pages, the Bible focuses on the maintenance of the “temple” and the endowments necessary to spreading the Good News. The Old Testament priesthood was to receive specific support: “And to the sons of Levi, behold, I have given all the tithe in Israel...in return for the service which they perform, the service of tent of meeting” (Numbers 18:21). Teaching in the New Testament on ministerial support from the resources brought in is just as strong. “Pastors who do their work well should be paid well and should be highly appreciated, especially those who work hard at both preaching and teaching” (1 Timothy 5:17). “And let the one who is taught the word share all good things with him who teaches” (Galatians 6:6). And again Paul reaffirmed this principle to the believers in the local church in Corinth stating “In the same way, the Lord ordered that those who preach the Good News should be supported by those who benefit from it” (1 Corinthians 9:14). Today these financial resources don’t just pay a pastor’s salary. They are managed in such a way as to also pay utilities like the electric and water bills and provide everything from children’s snacks and crafts, to evangelistic outreaches, to helping teenagers, to car repairs for single mothers, and much more.

*“The act of giving is a vivid reminder that it’s all about God, and not about us. It’s saying ‘I am not the point, He is the only point. He does not exist for me. I exist for Him’. God’s money has a higher purpose than my affluence. Giving is a joyful surrender to a greater person and a greater agenda. Giving affirms Christ’s lordship. It dethrones me and exalts Him. It breaks the chains that would enslave me.”*

[Howard Dayton]

When we give to the Lord our first fruits, the 10%, He will bless our faithfulness; and make sure that what we have left, the 90%, will provide for our needs. Keep in mind there are plenty of reasons why provision may be lacking. There are a number of causes, which can affect our finances; from personal character deficits, unmanageable debt, unwise spending, gambling, poor investments, etc. If it seems you are drowning in a financial whirlpool, seek a knowledgeable pastor or Christian financial counselor for help.

## HOW THEN DO WE GIVE?

Tithing is a benchmark for our giving. It is not the ceiling of what we give; it’s the foundation. Tithing is not where giving ends; it’s where giving begins. Tithing can establish a foothold to change the way we think about the management of the other 90% which has been entrusted to our stewardship. Giving initiates the allocation of ourselves, not just in Kingdom **giving** but more importantly in Kingdom **living**. This means we no longer stand on the sidelines, we are in the race! We can be sure God is more trustworthy with our 10% than we will ever be with 100%.

How we give is just as important as what we give. 2 Corinthians 9:6-8 says, "Remember this - a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop. You must each make up your own mind as to how much you should give. Don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. For God loves the person who gives cheerfully. And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others."

When we understand tithing as God's way of testing hearts, funding His work, and blessing His people, we begin to see scripture is clear on giving generously... **all that is left is our act of obedience!**

Here are just some of the scriptures from the New Testament which provide a clear blueprint for the structure of tithing and giving in this present testament.

1. Without drawing attention to ourselves (Matthew 6:2).
2. Liberally (Luke 6:38; 2 Corinthians 9:6).
3. Wisely and with premeditation (2 Thessalonians 3:1; 2 Corinthians 9:7).
4. With pure motives (Luke 12:33-34).
5. Regularly and joyfully (1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 9:7).
6. Sacrificially (Mark 12:43-44).
7. Personally and privately (1 Corinthians 16:2).
8. Looking toward healthy Christianity (Matthew 19:21).
9. Without neglecting other priorities (Matthew 23:23).
10. Thankfully as a priority (2 Corinthians 9:12; Proverbs 3:9).
11. Putting God's work first (Matthew 6:33; 1 Corinthians 16:2).
12. In response to the needs of the local church (Romans 12:1; 13a).

*(Numerous individual verses from Paul's writing to the Christians Church gathering in Corinth are used throughout this reader. Reading 1 Corinthians 16 and 2 Corinthians 9 in their entirety and in their context would be beneficial for anyone wanting to understand God's position and heart on giving.)*

## **A FINAL WORD**

God's thoughts and position are made abundantly clear in Malachi 3:8-12.

"Should people cheat God? Yet you have cheated me! But you ask, 'What do you mean? When did we ever cheat you?' You have cheated me of the tithes and offerings due to me. You are under a curse, for your whole nation has been cheating me. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so there will be enough food in my Temple. 'If you do,' says the LORD of Heaven's Armies, 'I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won't have enough room to take it in! Try it! Put me

to the test! Your crops will be abundant, for I will guard them from insects and disease. Your grapes will not fall from the vine before they are ripe,' says the LORD of Heaven's Armies. 'Then all nations will call you blessed, for your land will be such a delight,' says the LORD of Heaven's Armies."

Once again, make sure to see the reciprocal principle of conditionality in this passage. Conditionality is indicated by the word "if" There are many ifs in the Bible. "If " simply indicates where we have the privilege of choice to work with God or against Him (2 Chronicles 7:14). This passage in Malachi also contains the only occasion where God supports man's challenge of Him. Throughout the Bible, man is tested by God, by others and even challenged to test himself (Exodus 15:25; Job 1:12; Psalm 26:2; 2 Corinthians 13:5). We also see consistently throughout the Word "You shall not test the Lord your God" (Deuteronomy 6:16; Luke 4:12). But here is the single instance where God encourages us to do just that by saying: "Try it! Put me to the test!" (Malachi 3:10)

## **WALKING IT OUT**

Jesus' own version of the Malachi passage is found in Luke 6:38 where he states, "Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full – pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back." Notice here, Jesus doesn't specify the percentage of the gift. But he does compare the amount of the return based on the amount invested/given. From our obedience flows God's abundance.

In concluding this writing, we could look to the testimonies of those who have seen the faithfulness of God in their finances. We could give story after story of those who trusted for God's provision. We could chronicle account after account of the scriptures being fulfilled in the lives of those who have taken God at His Word.

Instead let's each walk out our obedience, as He has requested, (Malachi 3:10) and see if He will do what He said He would. Again, God can be trusted to keep His promises (Hebrews 10:23).

We can choose to violate the principle of tithing, but in the end we are the ones being robbed. It is a principle much like gravity – we can deny its direct connection to God's favor, but it remains unchanged. To leave this writing with the idea that stewardship is only about money would be a communication failure on my part. God desires to be far more in a Christian's life than simply acting as a heavenly bank teller in the sky. God desires to see our whole lives given in surrender to Him. I can imagine God wondering, "If they can't give me 10% of their money how will they ever give me 100% of their lives!?" Maybe this is why Jesus said, "No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money" (Matthew 6:24). Jesus could have said, "You



cannot serve both God and spouse”, or “God and business”. Why did Jesus say God and money? Because money is central to where our values are, and He knew it! Like all expressions of obedience, tithing cannot be a legalistic transaction but must remain a matter of the heart. The question remains: Is our heart where God wants it to be? A look at our checkbook provides a possible answer.

It is from a standpoint of stewardship that we begin to gain a clearer understanding of how to serve God fully. We give generously and facilitate with our tithe the kingdom of God all around us. We give generously and serve with our time, simply because there is a need. We give generously and minister with our talent because we possess a specific gifting uniquely given to us by the Lord. This is the attitude God is trying to bring about in the lives of His balanced serving saints. When we give generously to God of our tithe, our time and our talent, we will see our purposes fulfilled through ministry.

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I hope this reader shines some biblical insight on the issue of finances and giving of resources in the Kingdom. There are two things every person can do to make God’s kingdom more effective; we all can faithfully pray and we all can faithfully give to support the local church in the greater context of the global Church so that MANY will have the opportunity to be transformed by the love of God.

Be God’s ... Live as Loved,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pastor Marty Walker". The word "Pastor" is written in a smaller, more compact script, while "Marty Walker" is written in a larger, more flowing cursive style.

Pastor Marty Walker  
The Sanctuary

# Notes

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We grow a *community* of maturing lives  
one at a time by first *understanding* then  
*helping* each person fully embrace  
*God's love + truth.*

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