

The Joy of Tithing and Giving

Handling Our Time, Talents, and Treasure The Lord's Way

Text: 2 Corinthians 9:6-15; Malachi 3:6-18

Thesis: I want to invite you to experience the joy of the Lord in the spiritual practice of tithing and giving. The Lord is here with a new grace and new mercy to tithe and give. And, you are a part of a congregation that excels in giving faithfully, sacrificially, and extravagantly to the Lord.

Context: While I was on vacation recently, I read an article (6/29/17) that Derek Carr dropped “a bomb” on people when he signed the richest contract in NFL history. Reporters kept asking him what he would do with \$115 million. He said the first thing he would do is tithe on it, just like he had done when he got \$700 a month in scholarship money at college.

When I went to bed, I kept thinking about how shocked our culture is that people tithe to the Lord. I am shocked that believers would not tithe as a natural part of their spiritual rhythm and practice.

On that final day of vacation, I woke up at 3:00am. My mind was focused on sharing my story about tithing with Calvary. I was writing it in my head. I kept thinking about our financial story and about sharing our journey of faith regarding finances. I kept thinking about what the Lord has done for us.

So, I got up and wrote down some thoughts about tithing.

Here is the key question. What is the “why” for tithing?

Why do we tithe and give offerings over and above the tithe?

This morning I want to talk about *The Joy of Tithing and Giving*.

Before I share my “why,” I want to cover some key issues regarding tithing and giving.

What does the Bible say about tithing and giving?

1. Tithing

- a. Definition: The word “tithe” means “tenth.”
 - i. The first mention of the tithe is in Genesis and was practiced before the law was instituted, when Abram gave a tithe to Melchizedek. *Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, 19 and he blessed Abram, saying, “Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. 20 And blessed be God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand.” Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything (Gen. 14:18-20).*

- ii. The principle of the tithe is related to stewardship, obedience, and the nature of creation.
 - iii. **Stewardship:** The fact is that we are stewards of all that God has given us. *When God created humans, He made them to have "dominion" over all of the earth (Genesis 1:26). Dominion was not intended to be domination or exploitation. Dominion was God's call for human beings to be good and gracious managers of God's creation. Unfortunately, the sin of humanity interrupted God's plans for His world. Humankind became selfish, seeing the world as a means to its own self-centered ends. The things of the world were now seen as possessions with humans as owners, not as God's stewards. God's intention for His world did not change. He still desired that people see God as the Lord of everything and themselves as the managers of God's creation (Holman Bible Dictionary, Copyright 1991 Holman Bible Publishers).*
 - iv. The New Testament concept of stewardship centers in our commitment to Jesus Christ. When we follow him as Lord, he becomes Lord of our time, talents, finances, and everything. We realize that we are not our own, but we are bought with a price.
 - v. Faithfulness is the measure of success for a steward (1 Corinthians 4:2).
 - vi. We obey the Lord, not out of duty, but out of relationship and response to his love for us (John 14:15, 21-24).
- b. **Tithing: support your local storehouse**
- i. Throughout scripture we are told to bring our whole tithe to the Lord. Practically, that means bringing our tithe to the local storehouse where the priests serve and where the ministry of the Lord was supported.
- 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 (Numbers 18:21).*
- Moreover, we will bring to the storerooms of the house of our God, to the priests, the first of our ground meal, of our offerings, of the fruit of all our trees and of our new wine and oil. And we will bring a tithe of our crops to the Levites, for it is the Levites who collect the tithes **in all the towns where we work** (Nehemiah 10:37).*
- This seems to indicate that there are local meeting places (and attached storehouses), near to the people in their locales, where priests were ministering.**
- c. **Firstfruits:** we bring to the Lord the first of all we have. So, when we tithe, we obey and acknowledge what belongs to the Lord.

- i. **The firstfruits belong to God.** The reason we tithe and give offerings to the Lord is because the firstfruits belong to him.
- (1) *The LORD said to Moses, 2 “Consecrate to me every firstborn male. **The first offspring of every womb among the Israelites belongs to me, whether man or animal**” (Exodus 13:1-2).*
 - (2) *Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops (Proverbs 3:9).*
- ii. **The principle of representation:**
- (1) *The LORD also said to Moses, 12 “I have taken the Levites from among the Israelites **in place of** the first male offspring of every Israelite woman. The Levites are mine, 13 for all the firstborn are mine. When I struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, I set apart for myself every firstborn in Israel, whether man or animal. They are to be mine. I am the LORD” (Numbers 3:11-13).*
 - (2) **We commit and tithe to the Lord the first of our resources as a way of acknowledging that all we have belongs to the Lord. It is a testimony that says, “Everything I have is yours, O Lord.”**
- iii. **Blessing is also associated with bringing to the Lord the firstfruits through tithes and offering.** *Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; 10 **then** your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine (Proverbs 3:9-10).*
- d. **In Malachi, God reminds us of both blessing and judgment associated with the tithe.**
- i. *“I the LORD do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. 7 Ever since the time of your forefathers you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you,” says the LORD Almighty. “But you ask, ‘How are we to return?’ 8 “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. 11 I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit,” says the LORD Almighty. 12 “Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land,” says the LORD Almighty. 13 “You have said harsh things against me,” says the LORD. “Yet you ask, ‘What have we said against you?’ 14 “You have said, ‘It is futile to serve God. What did we gain by carrying out his requirements and going about like mourners before the LORD Almighty? 15 But now we call the arrogant blessed. Certainly the evildoers prosper, and even those who challenge God escape.’” 16 Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other, and the LORD listened*

and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honored his name. 17 “They will be mine,” says the LORD Almighty, “in the day when I make up my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as in compassion a man spares his son who serves him. 18 And you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not (Malachi 3:6-18).

- e. **And in the New Testament, Jesus reaffirmed the tithe.** “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**” (Matt. 23:23).

2. Giving

- a. I give offerings over and above my tithe to Calvary, to missionaries, to ministries, and to others in need.

- b. **The principle of generosity.** We give because we want to be like the Lord. Our God is generous and gives freely (2 Corinthians 8:1-9).

- i. *And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. 2 Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. 3 For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, 4 they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. 5 And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God’s will. 6 So we urged Titus, since he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. 7 **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.** 8 I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. 9 **For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich** (2 Corinthians. 8:1-9).*

- c. **The principle of sowing and reaping**

- i. *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 (2 Corinthians 9:6-15).*

- d. **The principle of giving to God and kingdom purposes:** offerings above the tithe for church, ministries, missionaries, etc.
- i. *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 Cor. 8:7).*
- e. **The principle of giving to the poor or to those in need** (to whom God would have you give)
- i. *He who is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will reward him for what he has done (Proverbs 19:17).*
- f. **The principle of giving to other believers**
- i. *Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality (Romans 12:13).*
 - ii. *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**. 13 *Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality.* 14 *At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality,* 15 *as it is written: "He who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little did not have too little" (2 Corinthians 8:7, 13-15).**

Back to the key question. What is the “why” regarding tithing and giving?

Why do I tithe and give offerings over and above the tithe?

1. **It is an act of worship.**

- a. The first recorded use of the word “worship” in the Bible is when Abraham went up to the mountain to surrender his son to the Lord (Genesis 22:5). Abraham acknowledged his obedience to the Lord and that everything he had belonged to the Lord.
- b. **Tithing for me is an act of worship.**
 - i. I worship by acknowledging that the Lord is worth everything by obeying him and giving back to him what already belongs to him.
 - ii. I worship the Lord by agreeing with God: the firstfruits belong to him.
 - iii. I worship the Lord by surrendering to his ways and his wisdom. The Lord tells me to tithe and give offerings to him.
 - iv. I worship the Lord by admitting that I am dependent upon him for everything.

2. **It is an act of honoring the Lord.**

- a. I honor the Lord by putting him first in our finances. I try to do that in every part of my life.
- b. I honor the Lord by trying to live according to his word, in the midst of a world and culture that lives by a different code and set of values.
- c. I honor the Lord by giving him thanks through an act of surrendering everything we have to the Lord, starting with our resources.
- d. I honor the Lord by giving offerings over and above my tithe. I don’t just do the minimum. However, I go above and beyond because Jesus went above and beyond for me.

3. **It is an act of love.**

- a. Jesus said, “If you love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). Tithing and giving are commanded throughout the Bible. Tithing and giving are spiritual practices in the Old and New Testaments. I believe that we express our love to God in deed and action, not just in words.
- b. Because I love the Lord, I want to be like him. He is generous; I want to be generous, too.

4. **It is an act of trust.**

- a. I trust the Lord with my life, my finances, my family, and my eternity.
- b. I trust the Lord that when I give to him I am laying up treasures for eternity. It is an eternal investment which will produce a crop 30, 60, and 100 fold.

- c. I trust that the Lord can do more with the 90% than I can with the 100%.
 - d. I trust that the Lord will fulfill his promise to take care of me, to cause me to have an abundance for every good deed, according to his word.
 - e. I trust that the Lord will rebuke the devourer on my behalf, according to his word.
 - f. I trust that the Lord will take care of us, that he is a good, good father. He can take all my messes, my best efforts, my failures, and my successes and do more with them for good than I can ask, think, or imagine.
 - g. I trust that the ways of the kingdom economy supercede human economies. (Give and it shall be given to you, for example. Sow and you will reap is another example.)
5. **It is an act of gratitude.**
- a. I am thankful that the Lord meets our needs.
 - b. I am thankful for every blessing and provision of the Lord.
 - c. I am thankful that the Lord is faithful and true.
 - d. I am thankful that the Lord can take my little and make eternal impact in lives.

Some Practicals: When I give...

Here is what I believe the word teaches me about tithes and offerings and here is how I respond.

1. **I seek to put the Lord first in my finances and everything.**
- a. I tithe on whatever comes through my hands, except for birthday gifts and such.
 - b. For example, years ago, my parents helped us buy a vehicle over a 5 year period. They gave us the money each month for a van payment. I tithed off that money each month.
 - c. Through the years we tithed whenever we received some funds from our parents or others (apart from birthdays and Christmas).
 - d. We tithe and give offerings to the Lord and trust his kingdom economy even when our broken financial systems and our broken world have stolen money from us. (Illustration: We bought our first home 2 months before the crash in 1983. Three times in the 1980's our mortgage was sold. Each time, we lost the couple of thousands of dollars we had in escrow.)
2. **I seek to acknowledge that the firstfruits of everything belongs to him.**

- a. So, I give systematically, as soon as possible after I receive funds.
 - b. So, I write the tithe check as close to payday as possible. That is my intention and practice. However, I am not legalistic about it.
 - c. And, I tithe from my gross amount, before taxes, savings, retirement, medical, etc. I don't want to give the Lord my leftovers. I want to give him my best.
3. **I seek to align with the kingdom economy and get in on the cycle of what the Lord is doing** (2 Corinthians 9:6-15). I want to get in on the cycle: from him, through him, and to him are all things.
- a. People in our culture will tell you that you are crazy to tithe.
 - b. Some CPA's and financial advisors will tell you that you can't afford to tithe. "You will need hundreds of thousands and even millions to live on in retirement."
 - c. I tithe and give offerings even though I don't have enough for retirement and I don't have all my debt paid off.
 - d. I will tithe and give offerings to the Lord even if we lose the tax deduction from the government one day.
4. **I want to steward what the Lord entrusts to me as a faithful servant in my time, talents, and treasures** (2 Corinthians 4:2).
- a. I believe that the tithe is the starting point for giving to the Lord. Actually, we set 11% as our tithe, and then we give offerings over and above our tithe. That comes out to around 14% of our income each year. I want to give more than that, but that is what we have been tithing and giving for years.
 - b. I also give to the Lord of my time and talents; they belong to him, too.
 - c. I ask the Lord what he wants me to do with his treasures.
 - i. Sometimes he gives me an amount to give to others or in an offering.
 - ii. Otherwise, if the Lord doesn't give me an amount, I just give what I have determined in my heart to give (2 Corinthians 9:7).

Our Testimony

As I lay awake on vacation, I kept thinking about our financial journey. We overcome by the word of our testimony (Revelation 12:11). I believe in the power of authenticity and vulnerability. I heard myself sharing our victories and failures in finances along the way. And, we have always tithed and given offerings over and above the tithe.

Then, I think about the impact of Calvary locally and globally. Our church tithes to missions. The Lord multiplies that grace many times over. For example, we have given

hundreds of thousands of dollars over the past few years to the work of the Lord in Myanmar. Many Buddhists and Muslims are coming to Jesus in that nation, and we are part of that testimony to the glory of the Lord.

Calvary receives funds from all over the nation and supports missionaries and ministries all over the world. You and are a part of extending the kingdom of God locally and globally, and that is exciting!

Challenge

I want to invite you to experience the joy of the Lord in the spiritual practice of tithing and giving. The Lord is here with a new grace and new mercy to tithe and give. And, you are a part of a congregation that excels in giving faithfully, sacrificially, and extravagantly to the Lord.

Addendum: Some additional principles to consider regarding money and tithing

1. **God's ways are right, bringing happiness and blessing, not cursing.**
 - a. **Read Psalm 16:1-11.** David saw God's ways as right; he described his blessings.
 - i. *I have set the LORD always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken (Psalm 6:8).*
 - ii. *You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand (Psalm 16:11).*
 - iii. It is a joy to teach about money.
 - b. **Consider the curses** that come when we disobey the good instructions of the Lord:
 - i. *Deuteronomy 28:45-48*
 - ii. *For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs (1 Timothy 6:10).*
 - c. **People who don't tithe put themselves under a curse of a broken economic system** (Malachi 3:8-14).
2. **God wants us to be content with what he provides.**
 - a. *Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5).*
 - b. **Are you content? Or are you living in fear or greed?**
 - i. **God doesn't want us living in fear of not having enough.** *"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?" (Matthew 6:25)*
 - ii. God doesn't want us living in fear of losing everything.
 - iii. Greed and covetousness also should be far from our lives.
 - iv. Note: Fear gives the enemy a highway into our lives, the right to traffic our lives.
 - c. **Learn to be content with what you have and to rejoice in what others get, for your life is more than possessions.** *Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (Luke 12:15).*
3. **God wants hilarious, joyful givers.**
 - a. God is not stingy; neither should we be stingy. The condition of our heart and the attitudes of our heart matter to the Lord (2 Corinthians. 9:6ff).
4. **God says that how we handle money determines the amount of spiritual riches which God will entrust to us.**

- a. Read Luke 16:8-16.
 - b. **Principle:** *“Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. 11 So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? 12 And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else’s property, who will give you property of your own? (Luke 16:10)*
 - c. **Point: The motivation, the grace, starts with loving God above all else. Love for God enables us to use money rightly and to relate to money correctly.**
 - i. *“No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money” (Luke 16:13).*
 - ii. *The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus (Luke 16:14).*
5. **God wants us to be like him, scattering seed generously and sowing bountifully** (2 Corinthians 9:6f; Mark 4:1-8)
6. **God wants us to pursue him, not money** (Matthew 6:33, 22:37-39, 4:19).

Observations

- 1. **Our body is full of faithful givers, who have proved their trustworthiness regarding money.**
 - a. *And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. 2 **Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy** and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. 3 For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, 4 they urgently **pleaded with us** for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. 5 And they did not do as we expected, but **they gave themselves first to the Lord** and then to us in keeping with God’s will (2 Corinthians 8:1-5).*
- 2. **If everyone in the church obeyed God just in their tithes and offerings, then there would be no lack and every purpose of God would be fulfilled.**
 - a. *There were no needy persons among them (Acts 4:34).*
 - b. All over our city, **purposes and visions go unfulfilled** for lack of resources and obedience by God’s people in the area of finances.
 - i. **Haggai 1:1-11.** Illustration: The vision of building the temple was unfulfilled.
 - (1) Because the people failed to give, the house of the Lord (vision / purposes of God) was unfulfilled.
 - (2) When God says something twice, it is important: “Now this is what the LORD Almighty says: “Give careful thought to your ways” (Haggai 1:5, 7).

3. **Today, we have the chance to respond well and to pass the test as a body.**
 - a. Through the years, people have sowed sacrificially into what God was doing here.
 - b. Some of us are reaping where we have not sown.
 - c. This is our chance to do our part in with our opportunity from God.
 - d. I want to invite you to experience the joy of the Lord in the spiritual practice of tithing and giving. The Lord is here with a new grace and new mercy to tithe and give. And, you are a part of a congregation that excels in giving faithfully, sacrificially, and extravagantly to the Lord.