

TEACH ME HOW TO GIVE

What the Bible says about giving?

The following notes provide some insight into what the Bible says about giving. Psalm 49 teaches us that there is no amount of money that can save someone or gain God's approval. In other words, you can't buy God or His salvation. At Restoration Road Church we firmly believe that the chief end of man is to bring glory to God in all that we do.

If you are a Christian, then Jesus is your savior and Lord. Everyone wants to accept Jesus as Savior, but it is much more difficult to accept Jesus as Lord. If Jesus is truly Lord of your life, then He will reign in ALL areas of your life, including how you spend your money. Jesus demonstrated the value of wealth by giving everything away that we might see how the things of this world are meaningless. Unfortunately, money is one of the most powerful idols. We worship it, find our hope, joy, and security in it. When we refuse to surrender our money to Jesus we commit idolatry by loving it more than him.

Please know that this brief explanation is not intended as a comprehensive study of all the Bible says about money or giving. The purpose of these notes are to answer some frequently asked questions regarding what, why, and how a Christian should give. We trust that you will prayerfully consider all that we have written as you seek to bring glory to God in all areas of your life.

What is a tithe?

Literally, the "tithe" is a tenth of the produce of the earth or labor consecrated and set apart for special purposes. Dedicating a tenth to God was recognized as a duty before the time of Moses. In Genesis 14:18-20, Abraham pays the first tithe to a priest named Melchizadek. Hebrews 7 indicates that Abraham's tithe consisted of "a tenth part of everything." Moreover, in Genesis 28:22, Jacob vows a tenth of all of his property to God.

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It is not until over 400 years later, when Israel is organized as a nation under the leadership of Moses, that God legislates tithing for His people. God commanded that a tenth of the people's income, their first fruits, was owed to God. All families were required to pay this basic tenth to the Levites for the ministry and maintenance at the temple. **Priests were not exempt**; they were required to pay a tenth from what they received from the people's tithe. The various laws governing tithing are spelled out in the book of Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. In the Old Testament, for the purposes of the Israelite nation, there appear to be three distinguishable types of tithes:

- 1) An annual tithe for the support of the Levites, the tabernacle/temple workers (Lev 27:30-33; Num 18:21-24). This was the only visible means of support for them, since they inherited no

land when Canaan was conquered under Joshua. The Levites, in turn, passed along a tithe of this tithe to the priests, the highest echelon of worship leaders (Num 18:26).

- 2) An annual feast tithe, which apparently went for the support of the house of God and its services (Deut 14:22-27).
- 3) A "social ministry" tithe, received every third year, for helping the poor and needy (Deut 14:28; 26:12).

The prescribed tithe (tenth) of the Old Testament was a requirement of the Law. Christians did not carry this requirement into the New Testament because Jesus fulfilled the law and freed us from its legal obligations. We are now under the law of Christ, a law of love, which according to the Sermon on the Mount (See Matthew 5-7) interprets the law to its fullest measure. In other words, a tithe is a helpful guide for us to day, but the measure of our generosity is to be in response to the measure of Jesus generosity on the cross

Who should and shouldn't tithe?

All repentant Christians, who genuinely believe the gospel of Jesus, should give. Those who fully understand the gospel and those who believe the gospel will desire to confess that gospel through their giving (2Cor 9. 6-15). A heart of giving is evidence of a transformed heart demonstrating the truth of the gospel. Tithing is an act of worship, recognizing our dependence on God, our recognition of his Lordship, and our commitment to fulfill the mission he has called us to with all that we have.

Those who are actively living in sin should not tithe. God values confession and repentance more than sacrifice. Your responsibility is to get right with God by confessing your sin, accepting His gracious forgiveness, and turning from what you know is wrong.

Those who are giving to gain God's favor or out of fear of losing it, should not give. This motivation is evidence of a misunderstanding of the gospel of grace.

Finally, those who do not yet believe should not tithe. God cannot be bought and even your "good gift" of money is nothing more than filthy rags in His eyes (Isaiah 64.6). God, along with all at Restoration Road, hope that you will not give but receive the free gift of salvation found in Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

What if I already give in other ways?

God expects that you will give of your time, resources, and money. While we never want to become self-righteous and legalistic about our giving, we also do not want to minimize its importance to the extent that we give when we "feel like it." ANY attempt to track our giving, offset it with our service, or otherwise measure our "sacrifice" is wrong. We can always give more and we will never be able to give as much as Jesus did for us. Money does not make up for service and service does not make up for money.

What if I have great debt, should I still give?

The simple answer is yes, giving back to God should always be the first thing we do assuming that that our giving is guided by the biblical principles provided. Enslavement to your debt is sinful. God will not bless any impulsive refusal to support his mission in order to deal with your sin. There may be a season in which you will need to restructure your finances. Any decision to use

the tithe to take care of sinful debt should be short term with the goal of regular tithing always in view. If you need financial assistance, we ask that you email restoration@rdchurch.org

How much should I give? Is it 10 percent?

The tithe is an Old Testament concept. The tithe was a requirement of the law in which all Israelites were to give 10% of everything they earned—or the crops and animals they grew—to the Tabernacle / Temple (Leviticus 27:30; Numbers 18:26; Deuteronomy 14:24; 2 Chronicles 31:5). The tithe paid for the day-to-day operations of what amounted to a theocracy. God ruled and priests served as they ministered to the people of God. If one adds up all of the “contributions” of the typical Israelite—the basic tithes, first fruit offerings, special almsgiving, prescribed sacrifices, specially vowed offerings, dedicatory offerings, free-will offerings, sacrifices, thanksgiving, and the half-shekel temple tax—it is conservatively estimated that the Israelite gave 33% of his income.

What does the New Testament say about Tithing?

Any casual reading of the book of Acts makes it clear that the churches were supported by the believers in them. The young churches gave of all they had to support one another, even going so far as to sell plots of land and giving proceeds to the church. Believers in Christ are not commanded to legalistically give 10% of their income although historically it has been employed as a minimum standard. Although it is a convenient standard of reference we cannot be legalistic about giving. Old Testament scholar Walter Kaiser once said, “if a tenth was the minimal amount under the Law, how can Christians do any less? Perhaps we should consider not how little but how much we can give, seeing how richly blessed we are in Christ.” A survey of the New Testament evidences a number of different principles we can employ guide us in our decision about how much we should give:

- 1) **Am I giving regularly?** Our giving should be on a on a regular basis, that is, weekly, bi-monthly, monthly, etc. Although there is nothing wrong with spontaneous giving, Scripture suggests that we be more mindful and systematic about our giving. Therefore, giving should not be an afterthought or derived from “leftovers”. It should be a result of the firstfruits of our labor and intentionally planned as part of our budget (1 Cor. 16:1-2).
- 2) **Am I giving proportionally?** Our giving should be in accordance with how each of us has been prospered by God; according to our ability (1 Cor 16:2; 2 Cor 8:2–3). Many of us have been blessed by God abundantly, others have not. Some people can give much more than 10%, others much less. This is an issue that must be worked out in your own heart—but it must be worked out.
- 3) **Am I giving sacrificially and bountifully?** We are called to give generously, even sacrificially, but not to the point of personal affliction (2 Cor 8:2–3; Phil 4:17–18).
- 4) **Am I giving intentionally?** Our giving should not be blind. We give in faith to further the preaching and ministry of the gospel. We give deliberately in order to meet a genuine need, not out of guilt merely to soothe a pressing request (2 Cor 8:4; Phil 4:16).
- 5) **Am I properly motivated in my giving?** Our giving is rooted in an understanding of the gospel. That understanding leads to belief; our giving is a confession of that belief. In essence, our motivation comes from a desire to give back to God as He has given to us.

Secondary motivations include a love for others (2 Cor. 8:9), a desire for reciprocity (1 Cor 9:14–15; 2 Cor 8:12–14; cf. Gal 6:6), and a reward from God (2 Cor 9:6).

- 6) **Am I giving cheerfully?** Our giving should spring from a cheerful heart which God loves. God is not interested in your money but your heart. Our sacrifices do not mean as much to him as our repentance. We are do to all things, including giving, without grumbling and with joy (Philip 2.14; 2 Cor 9:7).
- 7) **Am I giving voluntarily?** Our giving must not be reluctant or under compulsion. Giving ought to be done out of one's free volition (2 Cor 8:2–3, 8; 9:7; Phil 4:18)

Jesus has much to say about where we invest our money. ¹⁹ *“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*

Matthew 6.21 Jesus expects us to make an investment in His kingdom. Jesus expects more than our leftover time, talent, or treasure. Jesus expects our giving to be intentional, proportional, sacrificial and cheerful. When our giving is intentional, it will be proportional. When our giving is proportional, it will be sacrificial. When our giving is sacrificial, it will be cheerful.

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Should we tithe off our gross or net income?

Every Christian must pray and seek God's wisdom as to how much they should give (James 1.5). While many people believe that the Old Testament tithe is good principle, they often fail to seek God's face as to how much they should give, more or less, because it's easy. Questions about gross or net income can evidence thoughtfulness, but it can also cause us to fall into a legalism quite easily. The Bible does not specifically say whether we should give 10% off our gross or net income. The Old Testament teaches the principle of first fruits (Exodus 23:16; 34:22; Leviticus 2:12-14; 2 Chronicles 31:5). Old Testament believers gave from the best of their crops, not the leftovers. The same principle should apply to our giving today.

Should all of my tithe go to the local church?

There is no clear biblical mandate governing how much of our tithe should go to the local church and how much should go to other ministries. After someone is converted to Jesus, we believe they must be converted to mission. While there are many different mission fields in the world worthy of supporting, God has called us individually and corporately to specific locations. The local church is simply an expression of the universal church that all true Christians are a part of.

Every believer should be participating on mission in the manifestation of His church locally. In others words, every believer should give to their local church. We do this by offering our time, resources, service, and money to the local church. This is not a complex system of scales where you give 5% of your money, 15% of your time, 20% of your prayers, etc. Also, we do not offset our monetary giving because we give so much of our time, or vice versa. Any such attempts to justify what you do or not do are not motivated by a right heart.

Finally, while there is no verse stating, "You must give your tithe to this church," we do hope God leads you to join our mission here. As for your leaders and pastors, we have given all much of our lives to the church. This does not preclude us from supporting other ministries, but the substance of our giving is at the local church. We would encourage all members of Restoration Road to give to our mission first but lavish everywhere else too as God blesses you.

What does the money go toward at Restoration Road Church?

Essentially, the giving at Restoration Road church goes toward furthering our mission to proclaim the gospel in North Snohomish County and to teach people to live like Jesus. The more support that we have, the more we people we are able to proclaim that gospel to. Currently, our giving supports the functional aspects of the church (e.g. rent, insurance, salaries, benevolence) as we move towards finding a more permanent location to serve our mission. We maintain a benevolence fund for those in need in addition to supporting other church plants and church-planting ministries locally and abroad. For specifics, email restoration@rdchurch.org and one of our elders will respond to your questions.

How can I give at Restoration Road Church?

The paying of the tithes was not simply a regulation, but an important part of the Jewish religious worship. We believe that the giving of our tithes and offerings should be part of our worship to God. We do not "pass the plate" because it feels too passive and consumeristic. Instead, we have several offering containers where you can give on Sunday morning before service, after service, or during Communion as part of your worship experience.

Online giving is available but much less personal.