



Stewardship: Sharing by God's Plan

Lesson # 8

Is The Tithe Applicable In Today's World?

Key to our personal Spiritual Growth is understanding and believing the importance God places on sharing. Step one is to accept the entire Bible as the inspired Word of God, (see **2nd Tim. 3:16**), "¹⁶ *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,*" and that the principles given in the Old Testament are as important as those in the New Testament.

Jesus taught regularly from the Old Testament and often amplified, but never refuted, the Scriptures. Rituals were clarified. For example it is no longer necessary to make blood sacrifices because Jesus' blood was given as the ultimate sacrifice. We are no longer slaves to the Law because Christ's death pardoned us. For a Christian who is actively seeking God's will, God's principles point the way to peace, happiness and prosperity. The Creator of the universe has promised to guide us in the management of our finances if we will only follow His principles.

The Tithe

The tithe is often misunderstood. Some believe it to be a legalistic rule affecting only the Old Testament Israelites and has no real meaning today. Others believe it is a qualification for being a Christian and failure to tithe will result in God expelling us from our relationship with Him. Neither of these is correct.

The tithe, from its origin in the Old Testament has always been an outside testimony of a heart attitude. You see this in **Gen. 14:18-20** "¹⁸ *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." Now read **Heb. 7:1-10** "¹ *This Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him,* ² *and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. First, his name means "king of righteousness"; then also, "king of Salem" means "king of peace."* ³ *Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he remains a priest forever.* ⁴ *Just think how great he was: Even the*

patriarch Abraham gave him a tenth of the plunder! ⁵ *Now the law requires the descendants of Levi who become priests to collect a tenth from the people—that is, their brothers—even though their brothers are descended from Abraham.* ⁶ *This man, however, did not trace his descent from Levi, yet he collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises.* ⁷ *And without doubt the lesser person is blessed by the greater.* ⁸ *In the one case, men who die collect the tenth; but in the other case, by him who is declared to be living.* ⁹ *One might even say that Levi, who collects the tenth, paid the tenth through Abraham,* ¹⁰ *because when Melchizedek met Abraham, Levi was still in the body of his ancestor.”* and answer the following three questions.

- 1) How is Melchizedek identified?
- 2) Was Abraham obeying the Law of Moses?
- 3) Why do you think Abraham tithed to Melchizedek?

In **Matt. 23:23** ^{“23} *Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. 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.”* we see Jesus reaffirming the need to tithe, but He rebukes the Jewish leaders because they tithed legalistically. In **2nd Cor. 9:6** ^{“6} *Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.”* we see an important and very real benefit from tithing but one that is greatly misunderstood in today’s world. In **Rom. 11:35** ^{“35} *“Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?”* we see a warning of a pitfall from a wrong tithing motive. Here is the clarification. He who gives freely, not grudgingly, expecting nothing in return will be blessed, however God is under no obligation to multiply those gifts. If He does so it is because of His love for us, and also our own outward demonstration of our love for Him.

In **Mal. 3:8** ^{“8} *“Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. “But you ask, ‘How do we rob you?’ “In tithes and offerings.”* we see that both tithing and the failure to tithe does in fact demonstrate our heart attitude toward God. In **Mal. 3:10-11** ^{“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.”* we receive the instruction to bring the tithe to the storehouse (the church) that God might use it most proficiently.

Failure to bring the tithe to the storehouse and instead to designate where and to whom the tithe should be delivered is rebuking God’s role in how it is to be used. That act on our part suggests we are more capable than He in how the tithe is to be used. This is a serious and ongoing issue at many churches as many members continue to designate how their gifts are to be used. This strips God of any role He might play in obtaining His desired result.

Giving Above The Tithe

Giving is the evidence of our obedience.

Once we understand that giving, whether of our money, our time or our talents, is our testimony to God's ownership, it opens a higher level of sharing. Our offerings that are greater than our tithe demonstrate our obedience to God's Word. God regularly reveals needs around us, which provide opportunities for us to recognize our responsibility to help meet those needs. Admittedly it is important to verify the need as real and discern that our giving doesn't exacerbate bad habits.

Matt. 25:34-36 ³⁴ "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.' ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶ I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me." and **James. 2:15-16** ¹⁵ "suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶ If one of you says to him, 'Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?" hammer home the message about the importance of giving above and beyond the tithe.

Giving is the evidence of love.

1 John 3:18-19 ¹⁸ "Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. ¹⁹ This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence " speaks to deed versus tongue. Walking the walk not just talking the talk.

Sharing From Abundance

Sharing from abundance means we have much and we choose to share rather than to store. Once we give, we find that we cannot out give God. Giving from our abundance is a demonstration that money is not our master. Read these two scriptures and interpret them in your own words. **Matt. 19:23-34** ²³ "Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. ²⁴ Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.'" ²⁵ "When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, 'Who then can be saved?' ²⁶ Jesus looked at them and said, 'With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.'" ²⁷ Peter answered him, 'We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?' ²⁸ Jesus said to them, 'I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. ²⁹ And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. ³⁰ But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first. "

& **2nd Cor. 8:12-14** ¹² "For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have. 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,"

Sharing Sacrificially

One of the greatest blessings in life is sacrificial giving. Rarely do we here in America have such an opportunity. What we seem to have missed is that the real purpose of sacrificial giving is to spread the Gospel beyond our own sphere of influence. Very often that can mean foregoing our own needs in addition to our wants. Read and contemplate **2nd Cor. 8:7** *“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.”*

Paul describes sacrificial giving as gracious work and in **2nd Cor. 8:8-9** .” compares it to Jesus’ ultimate gift to us. *“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.”*

Giving, unlike tithing, is not a command. It is the outside indicator of a person’s inside spiritual condition. Worldly motives have clouded our thinking and dulled our sensitivity. Often our level of commitment and involvement with those in need is to give them a ride to the welfare office. God’s work should not be hindered because of a lack of funds. If so He will simply re-distribute the necessary funds to those willing to sacrifice personal luxuries for the needs of others. That is sacrificial giving and is clearly illustrated in **Luke 21:1-4** *“¹ As he looked up, Jesus saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. ² He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. ³ “I tell you the truth,” he said, “this poor widow has put in more than all the others. ⁴ All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.”*