

Why Do We Give Tithes

by Rev. Dr. Timothy C. Farmer September 2014 (*This version was post edited on 28 January 2015*) *The original unedited version was: Included in the literary collection Eight Sermons By Reverend Timothy C Farmer COPYRIGHT Unpublished Work © 2015 Timothy C. Farmer*

_The monetary gifts we give to a church help keep it alive. The church is a place to gather for worship, to study God's word, and to fellowship with each other. It's important to worship alone and with others. We fellowship with other Christians to help each other live as God wills. We continuously study and teach the Word of God because we are devoted to knowing the Word and helping everyone to know it.

_To support a modern place of worship, we usually have to rent or purchase the property, the building and its furnishings. It's necessary to have cleaning, utility, and maintenance services to make the place safe and comfortable. Most churches hire a pastor, to preach, teach, and always be available to provide various other services of a minister. And the larger churches need an entire staff to tend to their administration. Most churches belong to an association of churches that also takes tithes and gifts from each of the member churches, after those churches have collected from their individual persons.

_Even the smallest churches where every member shares the duties of ministry, may have expenses or a charity to support, if they meet in someone's home or in a pasture. Minister's who are not employed by particular congregations, are also part of the greater Christian church and have expenses to meet.

_So your tithes and offerings that support the churches needs, and any other things you might do to help church functions, is what makes it possible for the church to serve you and it's other missions.

_Churches are usually charitable because of knowing it's a blessing to help people in need. We support missionaries because the Lord tells us to teach the gospel to all the people of the world. So a person is usually able to help multiple causes by contributing to a churches effort towards these purposes.

_A tithe or tenth portion of a person's substance was established as a fair amount to give, back towards the beginning of civilization. The Bible gives both examples and historical records of people giving this expected portion. But it also records examples of people giving what they are able, whether it's more or less than the tenth portion. It's much easier for a wealthy person to give something than for an impoverished person, especially when a modern church only accepts money because it's not able to handle the gifts of goods or services. But every single dollar adds to the total of the treasury.

_In this day and age the most common ways of figuring the tithe is to give that portion of a person's periodic income, by figuring ten percent of every paycheck or other financial gains. And some people pay their church tithes annually or quarterly, when they figure their government income tax payments.

_People sometimes think they can fulfil their obligation to the Lord of by giving a tithe to nearly any charitable cause. It would surely bring a blessing to cloth or help feed a starving people or provide an education to someone in need. But the obligation to the Lord is to support the Lord's work, not just any good cause. The Lord's work includes teaching the Word of the Lord. Not just feeding people, but letting them know that they are saved from starvation because the compassion of the Lord led you to feed them. If you say it's only because you yourself cared enough to save them from starvation, then it was done in your own name and glorifies yourself, rather than giving the glory to the Lord.

_Of course when people will be severely punished for accepting life sustaining gifts from Christians, it might please the Lord to do His work with a bit of secrecy, to not irritate and increase a suffrage.

_The Bible first tells about offerings made to God by Adam's family in the 4th chapter of Genesis.

_The Bible first mentions a "tithe" in the 14th chapter of Genesis, when Abram gave a tithe from his spoils of war to Melchizedek, a priest of God who was also the king of Salem. From other historical accounts we know that it was customary to pay the priests and pay taxes in those times, just as it is today. Melchizedek obviously granted Abram and the other warriors' a passage through his territory, may have otherwise helped their success, and was a person who could give some very good advice.

_After Jesus Christ came as the testator of God's new covenant, and the apostles were expanding the Christian church by teaching the gospel. The Epistle of Paul to the Hebrews mentioned that same priest Melchisedec in chapter seven, where Paul was leading into an explanation that priests and preachers will be chosen or called to service by the Lord, as Christ also was called of God. As it was done before the old testament had designated the tribe of Levite to hold the Hebrew offices of priesthood.

_Reading the first four verses: FOR this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; ² To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; ³ Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually. ⁴ Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.

_That scripture tells of things more interesting than tithing, but reminds us that even Abraham tithed.

_We have modern ways of doing things, but most the ancient traditions that please God are the same.

_The 28th chapter of Genesis is where we find the story of Jacob's ladder. Jacob was a son of Isaac and Rebekah, and the grandson of Abraham and Sarah. Because of some uncomfortable differences with the families of the local girls there in Canaan, Jacob's parents sent him away to choose a wife from amongst his Syrian cousins. While on this journey to find a wife is when Jacob spent the night at a place he named Bethel, which is presumed to be the same Bethel that is located very near or at Jerusalem. He had a dream about angels climbing up and down the ladder to heaven. And God appeared in the dream telling Jacob that He's giving this land to him and his descendants, and He will be with them and keep them, meaning that He'll take care of them. So Jacob decides that this place is a gate of heaven.

_Starting with verse 20: And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, ²¹ So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God: ²² And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.

_Now Jacob is the fellow that God later gave the name Israel. Jacob eventually had twelve sons who became the fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel. And a vow such as Jacob made to God that morning is usually kept by a man's children and their children's children, continually passed down to those who follow the ways of their forefathers, and the ways of God.

_Several generations later while Moses led the children of Israel away from their bondage in Egypt, and it came time to fabricate and furnish the mobile tabernacle, which was also known as the Lord's sanctuary where they parked the arc of the covenant. Moses told the people what was needed for the tabernacle. In the 35th chapter of Exodus. All the people pitched in to gather the materials and do the workmanship. Draperies, lamp oil, even fragrances to make the place smell nice.

_Verse 21 says: And they came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing, and they brought the LORD's offering to the work of the tabernacle of the congregation, and for all his service, and for the holy garments.

_You can read thru five chapters here, about the material needs of the tabernacle and the priests.

_The 27th chapter of Leviticus gives instruction about the priests estimating the monetary value of property and livestock, to decide what a person should give as a tithe. But sometimes they'd take a tenth portion of the livestock and not even consider the monetary value.

_Deuteronomy chapter 16, verses 16 & 17 read: Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the LORD empty: ¹⁷ Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which he hath given thee.

_Commands to tithe or bring other offerings are told in several passages of the Bible.

_In the New Testament, offerings and gifts are often referred to as “alms”. Chapter six of Matthew recorded the words of Jesus Christ speaking about people praying in public and bragging about giving valuable offerings to advertise that they had generosity and respect for God, but their true purpose was actually to glorify themselves rather than glorify the work of God.

_Reading from the first four verses: TAKE heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. ² Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. ³ But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: ⁴ That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.

_Because of the many assorted characters at the various churches I’ve randomly visited, or regularly attended during my life. I’ve always been concerned with stirring up jealousies amongst the church house vultures and giving the gossipers something to talk about, by letting them know I had enough money to share with a church. More concerned with being robbed on the way home, than with the murmurs that I’m not paying my fair share. Or pestering ridicule from the ungrateful people, who think it’s foolish to give more than we’ll immediately receive in return.

_Every church don’t have those problems, but I know what Jesus was saying “when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret:” So with the greater the amount I’ve ever put in the offering. I know by trial and error to do so a bit more inconspicuously or more secretly than when giving a lesser amount.

_Some people actually give more than they’re able, even while suffering as much need as those who might receive charity from their giving. But still feel that it’s something they should do. Maybe because of love for the church and its work, compassion for the people it serves, or just to honor the Lord.

_A rich person can give a fortune and still be rich. A person of average income will maybe have to sacrifice one of their luxuries to give a tithe. Poor people who give offerings have to make do with less of the basic needs that they’re already lacking.

_There’s a short story in the 12th chapter of Mark where Jesus talks to his disciples about the measure of giving being according to what people have to give, rather than the actual amount they give.

_Starting at verse 41: And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. ⁴² And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. ⁴³ And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: ⁴⁴ For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.

_Those two mites that made a farthing, is thought to be the smallest unit of coined money that was available in that part of the world during that time period. The story reminds me of the old saying: to give your two cents worth

_But however the value of a farthing correctly compares to our currency. I think this story also tells us to not be ashamed of whatever small amount we have to give. We should feel honored to be able to give offerings to the Lord’s work, even if we are only able to give our two cents worth. Because every gift of any amount that each individual adds to the churches treasure, helps it grow into a larger amount that will pay the expenses of doing the work of spreading God’s word, and helping the congregation of the Lord’s church to follow the ways of God, that Christ and the Holy Spirit have taught us to live by.