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## Do Money and the Gospel Belong Together?

**Malachi 3:8: (NASB)** Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, 'How have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings.



Money - the Apostle Paul says the love of it is the root of all evil, yet we cannot survive without money. Furthermore, we cannot spread the good news of the Gospel without money. So what do we do about it? What are the responsibilities of the true church towards money? Should there be formal tithes collected or should such giving be left to the discretion of each who gives? Does the individual Christian have a monthly bill that he or she owes to God? How much giving is enough? Stay with us as we look into one of those subjects that everyone has an opinion on - \$\$\$\$money\$\$\$\$ - where does it fit in relation to the Gospel?

### Questions for consideration:

1. What are some of the different approaches Christians take to money?
2. What is the origin of tithing?
3. Does tithing apply to Christianity today?

#### 1. What are some of the different approaches Christians take to money?

For the sake of simplicity, we will divide Christianity into three categories as related to giving and tithing:

#### Three Approaches to Christian Giving:



#1. Tithing is a requirement that is put in place for our best benefit and we would do well to abide by this requirement.

#2. Tithing IS the covenant - the promise that we follow so that all of God's promises can be opened up to us.

#3. Tithing, while taught and appropriate in the Old Testament, has nothing to do with the Christian, because Jesus fulfilled the Law. God doesn't dictate to us what we should be giving.

Matthew 10:7-10: Jesus sent out his disciples to preach the Gospel and taught the concept, "Freely you received, freely give."

There are problems with all three approaches:

#1: Gives direction, but not terribly firmly - sets the standard but leaves room for some interpretation and

therefore a laxity on the part of those that tithe.

#2: Lays out a firm, no nonsense, "there is only one way" standard - what about Christian liberty?

#3: Gives no guidance except the individual's own conscience - how would you expect to raise any money for anything?

#### 2. What is the origin of tithing?

First of all, what is a "tithe"? The word means: tenth, 10%, 1/10

The Three Approaches to Christian Giving, *Opinions from three different ministers*

(Source: Wikipedia) Cognitive dissonance is an uncomfortable feeling caused by holding conflicting ideas simultaneously. The theory of cognitive dissonance proposes that people have a motivational drive to reduce dissonance. They do this by changing their attitudes, beliefs, and actions. Dissonance is also reduced by justifying, blaming, and denying. It is one of the most influential and extensively studied theories in social psychology.



## The first account of tithing in the Old Testament: Genesis 14:11-24

### Observations regarding this first occurrence of tithing in the Bible:

- Abram's tithe was not from his own goods, but from the goods of the land of Sodom.
- These goods were what he won back in battle.
- Melchizedek blessed Abram and gave credit for victory to God.
- Sodom's King offered all of the goods to Abram as just reward for the rescue of the people.
- Abram refused and gave all the rest back to its rightful owners!
- This "tithe" was a one-time offering that cost Abram nothing of his own goods.

**The Law of the Jews:** Leviticus 27:30-34: The tithes were to come from the land that God would give them, and those tithes would be considered holy before God.

**Sermon - Why We Tithe, Richard T. Ritenbaugh [cbn.com](http://cbn.com)**

- *God owns the land and everything that came out of the land.*
- *God gave the land which gave the means to be wealthy. Therefore, we owe from our wealth.*

**Where were those tithes to go?** Numbers 18:20-21: The Jewish people were to give a tenth to support the Levites, who had no inheritance in the land - no land ownership - therefore no way to make a living. The Levites relied on everyone else.

**But the Levites also had a responsibility to offer a tenth - how?** Numbers 18:25-30: When Israel was to give their tithes to the Levites, they would count out every tenth cattle that would be arbitrarily set aside. But the Levites had to give the BEST tenth to the Priesthood - Aaron and his sons. So it cost the Levites even a little more than it did the average person.

### Observations - the giving of tithes was limited to the following conditions:

- Tithes were of the increase from the land only, either of the harvest or cattle, both of which grew because of the land;
- Tithes were given to those who had no land, but who served the people spiritually instead. Those who served had to also give the best tenth of the total tenth they received.

**Sermon - Why We Tithe, Richard T. Ritenbaugh [cbn.com](http://cbn.com)**

- *God gave us the land to use and every landlord charges rent;*
- *In addition to being tenants, we are also faithful receivers of His bounty as Christians who are learning to praise God in everything we do.*

So the Christian tithing connection is taking the command of God regarding Israel's land literally and applying it directly to the Christian.

There were other tithes on top of the tithes given to the Levites, for a total of three:

1. As already discussed, the tithe given to support the Levites: Numbers 18:21
2. The tithe to be used by the tither to be able to worship the Lord throughout the year. Deuteronomy 14:23: You have heard of "emergency" funds? This was a "worship" fund!
3. A tithe once every three years: Deuteronomy 14:27-29: This was to support those who could not support themselves: a. Levites in your hometown; b. Strangers in your hometown; c. Fatherless or orphans in your hometown; d. Widows in your hometown. All of these tithes were required by the same Levitical Law!

If we are going to transfer the tithing concept from the Old Testament to current day, what happened to the rest of the tithes that were required?

Tithes were *never* money - they were *always* harvest or cattle!



**2 Chronicles 31:5-6: The tithe was from the land, not with money. Yet the use of money was very common...Genesis 23:15-16**

### 3. Does tithing apply to Christianity today?

Dr. Creflo Dollar as quoted on "Creflo Dollar's Tithing Manipulation," *J34 Contenders*

- *If tithing was so important, why doesn't Jesus command it?*

What New Testament texts are used to support Christian tithing?

**The only places where Jesus actually discusses the practice:** Matthew 23:23: Jesus said there was something more important than tithing.

Luke 18:10-14: Who was being spoken about in these texts? (In both cases, the person doing the tithing was a Pharisee.) What "Law" were they under? (The Jewish Law from the Old Testament.) Were they Christian? (...no.) Is there any indication that they even wanted to be Christian? (No, most of the Pharisees only wanted to condemn Jesus.) What level of importance is Jesus putting on tithing in these examples? (It is important, but not THE most important thing. Jesus doesn't even put tithing at the top of the list in relation to Judaism!)

Dr. Creflo Dollar "The Tithe is the Covenant," *J34 Contenders*

- *The tithe is the agreement, the "Covenant Connector."*
- *All of God's promises come through the tithe.*
- *No promise in the Word of God is available to you unless you tithe.*

Matthew 5:20 Matthew 6:33 Mark 12:41-44: This showed the condition of her heart. Our perspective is that Christian tithing is not mandated, but should instead come from the heart.

Galatians 5:18-21: This is a really long list of what keeps someone out of the kingdom...why isn't "lack of tithing" mentioned? If tithing is a mandate, as some of the sound bites we have listened to, that opens up all other promises of God, it should have been mentioned on a list like this.

**Tithing is Giving God Your Faith, Pastor Eddie Long**

- *When you pay your 10% of gross, you are giving God your faith!*

The Pastor is quoting from Malachi, the source of our theme text. But let's look at the *entire context* of this text and see who the true culprits are that are "robbing God." Malachi 1:6-10: But God wasn't talking to the people, he was taking issue with the Levite priests who were giving half-heartedly and by rote. They were cheating by giving the least instead of the best.

Malachi 2:1-4: Malachi 2:7-8 Malachi 3:2-3 Malachi 3:8-12: God is telling the priesthood that they robbed Him, because they did not do what they were supposed to do. He would give them a physical blessing if they did this physical thing. But as Christians, are we supposed to be looking for a physical blessing or a spiritual blessing? As Christians, are we supposed to be looking for what we can *get*, or what we can *give*? Should we say, "I gave this much, so God owes me," or should we be living our lives in sacrifice out of love and devotion for God?

**The Results of Tithing as your Faith, Pastor Eddie Long**

- *Even though it looks difficult, take a risk and don't let money possess you; trust God, if you support God, He will support you.*

The problem is, he is applying the Malachi scripture and the promise of God to Christianity. But these texts have NOTHING to do with Christians in regard to tithing. It is not even *primarily* meant to focus on the people of Israel at large, but to focus specifically on the Levites and particularly the *Priesthood* of Israel. The book of Malachi is written as a conversation between God and the Levites and it is meant to bring their accountability for the nation to the forefront.

Hmmm...do all of these preachers that preach tithing do the tithing themselves?

Jesus did NOT teach tithing for the Christian! For those that want to and they do it out of love, that's great. But we don't believe there is a *mandate* to do so. Also remember that the tithes in the Old Testament were to help those that had hardships - they received the tithe, they didn't give them. Is that happening today?

**Let's look at another New Testament text that confirms that Jesus could NOT have perpetuated such a ritual:** Hebrews 7:11-14

The connection of tithing to Christianity is simply that the principle of giving carries over, but that's it. There's no percentage except for the percentage of your heart.



1 Peter 2:9-10: The entire body of Christianity is called a "royal priesthood." This is the priesthood that replaced the Levitical priesthood. We believe that priesthood is in place for the purpose of blessing the world later. Tithing in the Old Testament was never about money.

**What kind of inheritance was this new priesthood given?** John 14:2-3: Scripturally, giving should be done from the heart, not in competition with others, and not out in the open.

Notice the core point of tithing - the land of Israel that God gave His people - is no longer a part of the conversation.

If tithing were a New Testament command or continuation, then consider the following:

- Gentiles were being converted by the thousands;
- Gentiles were pagan and had no sense of the Jewish Law, including tithing;
- This caused many major conflicts, especially concerning the rituals of the Law relating to the Gentiles. The core of Christianity came from the Jews.
- The conference in Acts 15 targeted the most major conflicts between the two cultures - but tithing was NEVER even mentioned at this conference. The big point was circumcision.
- Gentiles had never tithed and were NOT being asked to tithe! If tithing was a mandate for Christianity, there would have been much teaching on the matter to all of the new Christians who had no Jewish context.

If you believe that giving 10 percent is important to you and you see that as a spiritual obligation, God bless you. If you are trying to support the ministry, that's a wonderful thing. But realize that God is not looking at a percentage, He is looking at the heart. That is where Christian giving comes from. It is each individual Christian's conscience and liberty that dictates what we give, how we give, and to whom we give. Be a cheerful giver! Praise God for the ability to make those choices and for the accountability for each of us to have it upon ourselves and not be a community decision. 2 Corinthians 9:6-7

*So do money and the Gospel belong together?  
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...  
Think about it...!*

