



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:



NOTE: There were technical difficulties with the first sound clips during the live program. These were played later.



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: (NASB) ⁷And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'⁸Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. **Freely you received, freely give.** ⁹Do not acquire gold, or silver, or copper for your money belts, ¹⁰or a bag for your journey, or even two coats, or sandals, or a staff; for the worker is worthy of his support.

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: (NASB) ¹¹Then they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food supply, and departed. ¹²They also took Lot, Abram's nephew, and his possessions and departed, for he was living in Sodom. ¹³Then a fugitive came and told Abram the Hebrew. Now he was living by the oaks of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and brother of Aner, and these were allies with Abram. ¹⁴When Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive, he led out his trained men, born in his house, three hundred and eighteen, and went in pursuit as far as Dan. ¹⁵He divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and defeated them, and pursued them as far as Hobah, which is north of Damascus. ¹⁶He brought back all the goods, and also brought back his relative Lot with his possessions, and also the women, and the people. ¹⁷Then after his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). ¹⁸And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of God Most High. ¹⁹He blessed him and said, "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth; ²⁰And blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand." **He gave him a tenth of all.** ²¹The king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give the people to me and take the goods for yourself." ²²Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have sworn to the LORD God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth, ²³that I will not take a thread or a sandal thong or anything that is yours, for fear you would say, 'I have made Abram rich.' ²⁴I will take nothing except what the young men have eaten, and the share of the men who went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their share.



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: (NASB) ³⁰Thus all the tithe of the land, of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD's; it is holy to the LORD. ³¹If, therefore, a man wishes to redeem part of his tithe, he shall add to it one-fifth of it. ³²For every tenth part of herd or flock, whatever passes under the rod, the tenth one shall be holy to the LORD. ³³He is not to be concerned whether it is good or bad, nor shall he exchange it; or if he does exchange it, then both it and its substitute shall become holy. It shall not be redeemed. ³⁴These are the commandments which the LORD commanded Moses for the sons of Israel at Mount Sinai.

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

- *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: (NASB) ²⁰Then the LORD said to Aaron, You shall have no inheritance in their land nor own any portion among them; I am your portion and your inheritance among the sons of Israel. ²¹To the sons of Levi, behold, I have given all the tithe in Israel for an inheritance, in return for their service which they perform, the service of the tent of meeting.

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: (NRSV) ²⁵Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ²⁶You shall speak to the Levites, saying: When you receive from the Israelites the tithe that I have given you from them for your portion, you shall set apart an offering from it to the LORD, a tithe of the tithe. ²⁷It shall be reckoned to you as your gift, the same as the grain of the threshing floor and the fullness of the wine press. ²⁸Thus you also shall set apart an offering to the LORD from all the tithes that you receive from the Israelites; and from them you shall give the Lord's offering to the priest Aaron. ²⁹Out of all the gifts to you, you shall set apart every offering due to the LORD; the best of all of them is the part to be consecrated. ³⁰Say also to them:



When you have set apart the best of it, then the rest shall be reckoned to the Levites as produce of the threshing floor, and as produce of the wine press.

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

- *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: (NASB) *²¹To the sons of Levi, behold, I have given all the tithe in Israel for an inheritance, in return for their service which they perform, the service of the tent of meeting.*
2. The tithe to be used by the tither to be able to worship the Lord throughout the year. Deuteronomy 14:23: (KJV) *And thou shalt eat before the Lord thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place His name there, the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the Lord thy God always. You have heard of "emergency" funds? This was a "worship" fund!*
3. A tithe once every three years: Deuteronomy 14:27-29: *²⁷And do not neglect the Levites living in your towns, for they have no allotment or inheritance of their own. ²⁸At the end of every three years, bring all the tithes of that year's produce and store it in your towns, ²⁹so that the Levites (who have no allotment or inheritance of their own) and the aliens, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns may come and eat and be satisfied, and so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.*

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: ⁵And as soon as the commandment came abroad, the children of Israel brought in abundance the firstfruits of corn, wine, and oil, and honey, and of all the increase of the field; and the **tithe <Strong's #4643>** of all things brought they in abundantly. ⁶And concerning the children of Israel and Judah, that dwelt in the cities of Judah, they also brought in the **tithe <4643>** of oxen and sheep, and the **tithe <4643>** of holy things which were consecrated unto the LORD their God, and laid them by heaps.

The tithe was from the land, not with money.

Yet the use of money was very common...

Genesis 23:15-16: (NIV) ¹⁵Listen to me, my lord; the land is worth four hundred shekels of silver, but what is that between me and you? Bury your dead. ¹⁶Abraham agreed to Ephron's terms and weighed out for him the price he had named in the hearing of the Hittites: four hundred shekels of silver, according to the weight current among the merchants.

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: (NIV) "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.

Jesus said there was something more important than tithing.

Luke 18:10-14: (NIV) ¹⁰Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: God, I thank you that I am not like other men--robbers, evildoers, adulterers--or even like this tax collector. ¹²I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get. ¹³But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, God, have mercy on me, a sinner. ¹⁴I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

- 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: (NIV) *For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.*

Matthew 6:33: (NASB) *But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*

Mark 12:41-44: (NASB) ⁴¹*And he sat down opposite the treasury, and began observing how the people were putting money into the treasury; and many rich people were putting in large sums. ⁴²A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which amount to a cent. ⁴³Calling his disciples to him, he said to them, Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the treasury; ⁴⁴for they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on.*

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: (NASB) ¹⁸*But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. ¹⁹Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, ²¹envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

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: (NIV) ⁶*A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If I am a father, where is the honor due me? If I am a master, where is the respect due me? says the LORD Almighty. It is you, O priests, who show contempt for my name. But you ask, How have we shown contempt for your name? ⁷You place defiled food on my altar. But you ask, How have we defiled you? By saying that the Lord's table is contemptible. ⁸When you bring blind animals for sacrifice, is that not wrong? When you sacrifice crippled or diseased animals, is that not wrong? Try offering them to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you? says the LORD Almighty. ⁹Now implore God to be gracious to us. With such offerings from*

One listener's thought: Tithing is something you do from your heart when you're being fed the truth.



your hands, will he accept you?--says the LORD Almighty. ¹⁰"Oh, that one of you would shut the temple doors, so that you would not light useless fires on my altar! I am not pleased with you, says the LORD Almighty, and I will accept no offering from your hands.

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: (NIV) ¹And now this admonition is for you, O priests. ²If you do not listen, and if you do not set your heart to honor my name, says the LORD Almighty, I will send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings. Yes, I have already cursed them, because you have not set your heart to honor me. ³Because of you I will rebuke your descendants; I will spread on your faces the offal from your festival sacrifices, and you will be carried off with it. ⁴And you will know that I have sent you this admonition so that my covenant with Levi may continue, says the LORD Almighty.



Money can be a blessing or a curse, depending on how it does or does not lead us to Jesus. We need to always have the right spirit.

Proverbs 30:8,9: ...give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.

Malachi 2:7-8: (NIV) ⁷For the lips of a priest ought to preserve knowledge, and from his mouth men should seek instruction--because he is the messenger of the LORD Almighty. ⁸But you have turned from the way and by your teaching have caused many to stumble; you have violated the covenant with Levi, says the LORD Almighty.

Malachi 3:2-3: (NIV) ²But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. ³He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the LORD will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness,

Malachi 3:8-12: (NASB) ⁸Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, 'How have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings. ⁹You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation of you! ¹⁰Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows. ¹¹Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field cast its grapes, says the LORD of hosts. ¹²All the nations will call you blessed, for you shall be a delightful land, says the LORD of hosts.

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 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.



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.

Hmmmm...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: (NRSV) ¹¹*Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood—for the people received the law under this priesthood—what further need would there have been to speak of another priest arising according to the order of Melchizedek, rather than one according to the order of Aaron? If perfection had been obtainable through the Levitical priesthood - and it wasn't - things would have moved on that way.* ¹²*For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well.* ¹³*Now the one of whom these things are spoken belonged to another tribe, from which no one has ever served at the altar.* ¹⁴*For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests. The inability of the Law and its priesthood (due to sin) to bring the people to God caused a change - now there would be a new High Priest and a new priesthood.*

1 Peter 2:9-10: (NASB) ⁹*But you are a chosen race, A royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;* ¹⁰*for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*

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: (NASB) ²*In my Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.* ³*If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am, there you may be also.*

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: (NASB) ⁶Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

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

