

TITHE CHALLENGE

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It was God's idea that His people should bring to Him their tithe (a tenth part of their increase, or of the firstfruits of their harvest). Setting basic giving at 10% was God's plan.

Tithe Tax

During an election season like this one, there's a lot of talk about taxation. Virtually every candidate proposes to reduce the debt and increase spending without raising taxes—a feat that has proven greater than nearly every elected leader.

Just dream with me for a moment... What if God's plan (the tithe) were adopted as a design for taxation? What if every wage earner, every business owner, and every corporation contributed to the National Trust exactly 10% of their gross income or profit?

In 2013, the Gross National Product of the United States was about \$17 trillion. Using that general figure, we would generate a minimum of \$1.7 trillion dollars for national spending (approximately \$6,000 for every man, woman, and child). On January of this year, our total gross national debt stood at \$19 trillion. That's only eleven times our proposed annual tithe tax. Seems like it could be paid down significantly in a single generation.

What I have suggested here is far from a plan for our complex economics, but it illustrates the power of the tithe.

And the burden of a tithe tax would be shared equitably by all. For most Americans, the tithe would be a significant reduction of their present tax burden. For a relative few, and for corporations, it would be a significant, but appropriate, increase. Biblically appropriate, for it is written, "From him to whom much has been given, much more will be expected."

Common Objections

Some people object to tithing on the basis that it was introduced in the Old Testament. Therefore, they say it no longer applies to us today. By that simplistic reasoning, redemption itself would no longer apply, because that was also introduced in the Old Testament. Of course, redemption has been re-emphasized in the New Testament (but so has the tithe).

Others object because the tithe is specified as part of the Law of Moses, which has been replaced by the Grace of Jesus Christ. But the fact is, as Jerry brought to our attention last Sunday, that the tithe was introduced *before* the Law was given. It was introduced by Abraham, the father of our faith, under a covenant, not of law, but of promise.

It was later codified with specifics in the Law of Moses for all of God's people, along with a variety of other offerings. But the tithe was carried over into the New Testament. Jesus and Peter paid the tithe. And if it had only been Jesus, that would be a pretty good example, since we all have been called to imitate Him. This baseline of faithful giving hasn't been eliminated in the New Covenant.

Expanded Stewardship

In fact, the New Covenant does not reduce our responsibility to give in the name of the Lord; it actually *expands* the concept of giving. As a follower of Jesus Christ, when you have given the tithe, you're not done! All that you have belongs to God, and you are the manager of your holdings. (If you've ever thought to yourself, "If I were in management, I would..." This is your chance to work that out!)

If you hold back the tithe, you're robbing (cheating) God.

If you stop at the tithe, you're hardening your heart—you're stingy. That is the New Covenant concept of money management.

The tithe is the Christian money-management baseline. It demonstrates that you trust and honor God as the provider of all that you have and receive; therefore, you devote (sanctify, set apart) the tithe in His name. If you want God to be the Senior Partner in your business or in the financial aspect of your life, manage it His way.

Test The Lord

Malachi 3:6-12 (NET)

⁶ *"Since, I, the LORD, do not go back on my promises, you, sons of Jacob, have not perished.*

⁷ *From the days of your ancestors you have ignored my commandments and have not kept them! Return to me, and I will return to you," says the LORD who rules over all. "But you say, 'How should we return?'*

⁸ *Can a person rob (cheat) God? You indeed are robbing me, but you say, 'How are we robbing you?' In tithes and contributions!*

⁹ *You are bound for judgment because you are robbing me — this whole nation is guilty.*

¹⁰ ***"Bring the entire tithe into the storehouse so that there may be food in my temple. Test me in this matter," says the LORD who rules over all, "to see if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until there is no room for it all.***

¹¹ *Then I will stop the plague from ruining your crops, and the vine will not lose its fruit before harvest,” says the LORD who rules over all.*

¹² *“All nations will call you happy, for you indeed will live in a delightful land,” says the LORD who rules over all.*

God invites you to test His faithfulness in this way. *“Bring the entire tithe into the storehouse.”*

The results will include:

- *Provision*, God’s assurance that you will have what you need
- *Protection*, God’s intervention to protect what you already have
- *Blessing*, God’s favor in other areas of life because you trust Him

If you’re serious about developing a God-blessed life, get started tithing early and faithfully.

How To Tithe

Do you receive a weekly or monthly allowance? Divide that amount by ten and put it aside for the Lord as a tithe.

Do you receive a paycheck for your work? Look at the stub to find the GROSS PAY. Divide that by ten. That’s your tithe.

Do you work for yourself? What did you earn last year (what did you report to the IRS)? Divide it by twelve. Then divide that by ten. That’s your monthly tithe. If your earnings decrease significantly, you can adjust your tithe. If they increase, do the same.

The Church At Work

We need to hire a pastor to serve our children and youth. Most of the people who are presently serving in Children’s Ministries are also tithing. Some of you are neither serving nor tithing. You’re not carrying your weight!

The tithe pays regular expenses, like salaries, utilities, supplies, licenses and fees, plus an initial contribution to our global outreach with the Gospel (because we tithe, as a church). If you’re not *already* giving the tithe, your gifts to missions and special needs (like, One Day to Reach the World) may be emotional or obedient giving, but they’re not *faithful* giving. They’re not paying our bills.

Faithful obedience is better than occasional sacrifice.

Your faithful giving (tithing) is what advances ministry in the church—this church or any church. You have no right to complain about lack of ministries if you don't tithe. You're not entitled to specialized ministries if you don't tithe.

The church is a volunteer organization. It is not a philanthropic organization. Every member must contribute, in various ways. Unless you are homeless and penniless, you are able to give financially (God only requires a tenth). If you're physically able, you should also serve. That's how church works!

And when this plan breaks down, many things don't work so well. We limp along.

Overflowing Disobedience

If you're not tithing, you're probably also not praying much, or not praying effectively, because both are *rooted in your trust in God* and His loving provision for you.

So, think about this: If you're not giving consistently, and you're not praying consistently, what evidences of a Christian life are you presenting?

Tithing and Saving

Tithing is not about taking money away from you, it's a principle of financial management. Ultimately, it's about increasing your wealth. You see, there's a difference between saving and hoarding. You should be saving an amount equal to your tithe.

The first thing you need to save is an Emergency Fund. You never know when your car or an appliance may break down, but if you have an Emergency Fund in place, your shock and frustration will be far less. Eventually, your Emergency Fund should equal six months' income.

Then you can work on eliminating debt. Debt, especially credit card debt is eating you alive. Some of you are reluctant to give God 10%, but you're willing to pay the bank 24%. What are you thinking?!? Pay off your debts and live within your means. You'll sleep better and be happier. And then you can afford to be more generous with your life.

After you pay off your debt, then you can begin to build additional savings for retirement or your children's inheritance or home ownership. It all begins with the tithe, and the tithe is what brings all your finances into order.

Misplaced Fear and Trust

Non-tithing is a stubbornness of heart. It is a spiritual resistance. It is misplaced fear and misplaced trust.

Misplaced fear, because you fear the future, but you do not fear the Judge of all the earth before whom you will one day stand.

Misplaced trust, because you doubt God's love and power, yet you trust your own ability to manage your life.

By the way, how has that been working for you?

God Loves a Cheerful Giver

God loves "cheerful givers" because cheerful givers are *like God*. He sends the sun and rain to all. He *delights* to give. So much so that, to him who gives what he has, God gives even more.

Give freely and become more wealthy; be stingy and lose everything. (Proverbs 11:24; NLT)