

Introduction

The Christian life boils down to two mandates: love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength! And love your neighbor as yourself! Strip away every thing else! Strip away your religious practices, your position in the church, your religious heritage, your hours of involvement in religious activities. At the end of the day, ask yourself this question: Did you love the Lord and did you love your neighbor as the Lord has loved you?

The Tithe Today

Are we, as Christians, free from the Law of Moses, obligated to give one-tenth of our income to the Lord? My answer to that question is two-fold. On one hand, everything we have - time, talent and treasure - belongs to the Lord. On the other, as Christians who love the Lord and seek to know His will, we ask, "Lord, how much should we give back to you in that you own everything?"

I suggest that the tithe offers a splendid guiding principle of stewardship. The tithe, that is, the practice of lovingly setting aside at least 10 percent of one's income for the work of the Lord, may be a neglected practice, but it is one that benefits those living under grace. Why?

There is nothing that has more potential to deepen or destroy a person's relationship with God and others than money! Money has thrown more people into prison, broken up more friendships, caused more divorces, and closed down more worthy organizations, than any other factor.

This is why Jesus spent so much time talking about it! Here are NT examples:

- Mk 10:21 - Sell and give
- Mt 6:19 - Do not lay up treasures in heaven
- Lk 12:15 - Beware of covetousness
- Mt 6:24 - Can't serve two masters
- Mt 19:23 - Hard for rich man to enter
- Mt 6:21 - Where your treasure is, there is your heart

Jesus taught that a person will never reach spiritual maturity until his or her attitude toward money is right. In Luke 16:11 we read, "If you are unfaithful with righteous mammon, who shall entrust you with true riches?" In other words, "If you can't handle money, I will not entrust you with souls."

A little boy once altered the familiar prayer, "Now I lay me down to sleep," and then prayed "If I should die before I live." Many Christians are dying on the vine.

They are not progressing in their spiritual walk because they have refused to get their finances right with God. They have tried to live in obedience with God without opening their checkbooks to the Lord. I therefore encourage tithing as a step towards spiritual maturity.

Seven Truths about the Tithe

I am not sure when the trend started, but a surprising percentage of pastors have concluded that tithing is not for Christians. One said, “We are under grace, not under the law, and tithing is part of the law.” But here are seven truths about the tithe, originally compiled by the stewardship ministry INJOY (<http://www.injoy.com/>).

1. Tithing was sanctioned by God before the Law of Moses was given. In fact, 400 years before the Law of Moses, Abraham (Genesis 14:20) and Jacob (Genesis 28:20-22) tithed.
2. Tithing was sanctioned by God while the Law was in effect (Lev 27:30-32 & Malachi 3:10).
3. Tithing was sanctioned by God after the Law was fulfilled in Christ (Matthew 23:23 & Hebrews 7:8).
4. Tithing in the Old Testament was part of the moral law, not the ceremonial law. Jesus did not cancel the moral law; he confirmed it.
5. The tithe is one-tenth of all that God provides.
6. The tithe is one element of giving to God, not its full extent. Both the Old and New Testaments speak of both “tithes and offerings.”
7. Jesus commanded tithing after he announced the Church (Matthew 16:16-18 & 23:23).

The following “ten tips for tithers” is excerpted from one of Pastor Hamstra’s sermons on tithing.

Ten Tips for Tithers

1. Tithe because it is a means of *thanking* God!
2. Tithe because it is a means of *trusting* God.
3. I encourage the tithe as a *testimony* of God's ownership.
4. I encourage tithing because a tithe is a *tool* for God.

5. I encourage Christians to tithe because it is a fortress to protect us from *threats* to the health of our souls such as materialism.
6. I encourage the tithe because it *tenders* blessings.
7. I encourage tithing because the tithe is a *tutor* or schoolmaster.
8. I encourage Christians to tithe because tithing is a *test* of spiritual maturity.
9. I encourage Christians to tithe because tithing makes them an integral part of the *team*.
10. I encourage people to tithe while warning them of its *temptation*.