

DOES GOD REALLY NEED OUR MONEY?

The whole subject of giving to God can be divided into four distinct categories:

- Tithing - a testimony of God's ownership.
- Obedience - helping meet the obvious needs around us.
- Abundance - helping others from our abundance (savings, earnings, etc.)
- Sacrifice - yielding our own needs for the greater needs of others.

Here we will deal specifically with the category of "Tithing". To put tithing into its proper context, it is very important to understand why we should give to God in the first place. After all, ***does God really need our money?***

Why Give to God?

The basic reason why we should give to God is really for our own sake. In so doing we are reminded that He is the owner of all that we have, and we are only managers. When we try keeping it all to ourselves, we reveal a serious problem in our perspective on life. We are looking at ourselves as owners and not managers (stewards).

When we look at money and possessions that way, we inevitably look at every other aspect of our life the same way. Each of us sees himself or herself as the person in charge. We begin to think of God as our servant, there to help us from time to time when we call upon Him. Rather, we should see ourselves as God's servants, ready always to do His will. That is why we call Him *Lord*, meaning "ruler," "owner," "sovereign," "king."

This is why giving to God is so important. It reminds us of who He is, who we are, and what our relationship should be to the things He has allowed us to manage in His name.

The Purpose of the Tithe

The tithe serves as an external, material testimony of God's ownership of both the material and spiritual things of our lives. The first place in God's Word where the tithe occurs is in Genesis 14. Abraham, on his return from the daring rescue of Lot from four enemy kings, encountered the priest Melchizedek and voluntarily surrendered to him a tithe (one tenth) of everything he had. In Hebrews 7:1-10 we are told that Abraham did this to acknowledge God's sovereignty.

Now it is often said that the tithe is Old Testament "legalism," but we have just seen that Abraham tithed some 430 years before the Law was given to Moses. Although the tithe is mentioned in the Law, it is interesting to note that no punishment was indicated for not tithing. (Consequences for not tithing included withholding of blessings, but this is not to be construed as punishment.) Tithing has been, and always will be, a voluntary act on the part of God's people.

The Promise of the Tithe

Whereas not tithing brings about a withholding of God's blessings, tithing with proper motives invokes God's blessings: *"Bring 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. Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it may not destroy the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field cast its grapes,' says the Lord of hosts. 'And all the nations will call you blessed, for you shall be a delightful land,' says the Lord of hosts"* (Malachi 3:10-12).

The Storehouse

In order to bring our tithes into the “storehouse,” it is necessary to determine what, exactly, the storehouse is. In biblical time it was a physical place where the Jews would deliver their offerings of grain or animals. A storehouse had specific functions according to God’s Word:

1. To feed the tribe of Levi (Numbers 18:24-29). The tribe of Levi and the priests would be the equivalent of pastors and other church staff, and missionaries and evangelists today.
2. To feed the Hebrew widows and orphans living within the Hebrew city (Deuteronomy 14:28-29). They would be equivalent to the widows and orphans served in a local church.
3. To feed the Gentile poor living in the Hebrew city (Deuteronomy 14:28-29). Today’s equivalent would be the unsaved people in the community surrounding a local church.

The local church serves as the storehouse in God’s economy today.

The Amount of the Tithe

Although the word *tithe* means “tenth,” a tenth part of one’s increase is the *minimum* that a Christian should tithe. It has been calculated that the Old Testament tithe, along with other additional offerings that were prescribed in the Law, come to about 23 percent annually.

As we have seen the tithe’s purpose is to be a testimony of God’s ownership, and thus it is meant to be individualized. It was never intended that everyone should give the same amount, but that each should give his tithe bountifully and cheerfully (II Corinthians 9:6-7).

Deuteronomy 14:23 says, *“And you shall eat in the presence of the Lord your God, at the place where He chooses to establish His name, the tithe of your grain, your new wine, your oil, and the first-born of your herd and your flock, in order that you may learn to fear (love) the Lord your God always.”*

Why did God establish the tithe? In order **that we may always learn to fear the Lord our God**. Is this applicable today? Review what God’s Word says: *“The fear (love) of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom...”* (Proverbs 9:10). If we want to be wise in handling our finances, we must seek that wisdom from God. One of the ways God intends for us to do this is to acknowledge His Lordship by tithing to Him.

(excerpt from “Answers to Your Questions about Tithing” by Larry Burkett.)