

Why We Do It - Tithes & Offerings

There is a saying that “money makes the world go round”. People have even made songs about it. Money is the driving force in much of the world but especially in our nation. It cost you money to drive here today. The clothes you are wearing cost you money, even if they were given to you, someone bought them.

It costs us money to have electricity in this sanctuary this morning so you can see better and the music can be louder and you can hear me better.

Money influences most decisions that people make on a daily basis. That saying that “money makes the world go round” is saying that without money, this world would not continue to function.

But money isn't everything.

It can buy a house, but not a home.

It can buy a bed, but not sleep.

It can buy a clock, but not time.

It can buy you a book, but not knowledge.

It can buy you a position, but not respect.

It can buy you medicine, but not health.

Money can fill the offering plate, but it won't fulfill you or save you.

Money isn't everythingbut money is important and the bible speaks more about money than it does on hell....that should tell us something!

Money is a sensitive subject. It's something I've held off preaching about for almost 2.5 years now. The subject of money offends people like no other topic. Everyone has their own idea of what is “right” when it comes to money and most people are not open to hearing any other way....

I've had people tell me how they hate when there is a money sermon, “I've heard it all....I don't come to church for this, it's not what I need”. If that's you.... I'm asking that this morning, you put that mindset aside, if you have an open heart, God will speak to you today!

I didn't warn anyone to wear their steel toe boots today....but why do we do that anyway.... if I'm going to step on toes I want you to know it....

This morning as I continue the series “Why We Do It”, I'm going to look at Tithes & Offerings. My motive is to help you understand what the Lord desires from you. This message is not to guilt you into giving more, it's to bring understanding of what the bible says about money.

Notice we have already received tithes and offering for today. I'm not trying to provoke you to give more today so we can get one big collection. I want you to hear this message, pray about it, reflect on it, study on your own, and hopefully it provokes you to a generous heart....a permanent change by the working of the Holy Spirit!

PRAY

2 Corinthians 9:6-7 (NKJV)

6 But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.

This is what God desires for you....not grudgingly or of necessity but cheerful giving. Is that hard for you to do? Do you give out of necessity or reluctantly, unwillingly? Do you sometimes wish you didn't have to give? Do you only do it because others are watching or expecting it from you?

If the answer to any of those questions is YES, then I pray that today God will speak to your heart by the power of His Spirit.

I LOVE to give, specifically I love to give to God and His church. I'm being completely honest when I say this....I NEVER give with a heart where I wish I could keep it, or think of what else I could do with this money, or question if I really HAVE TO give it....I enjoy it. When I miss a Sunday, I can't wait to give double next Sunday. I really love putting a check in that offering box....BUT that has not always been the case....it took a miraculous work of God.

I totally used to be a person that LIVED for money. It's why I worked full time hours when in high school....sometimes I had two jobs....as a teenager! I had a love for money, I liked "stuff".....(still do like stuff)! But God has changed my heart to be one that loves God and loves people more than I love possessions.

That's my hope for you today, that your love for God and people would overtake a love for money or possessions. That we can all focus on what is eternal and not what is temporary.

1 Timothy 6:10 (NKJV)

10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

One of the most misused scriptures in the entire bible....money is not evil....it's the LOVE of money is a root of all kinds of evil....even to the point that it causes people to stray from the faith in their greediness!

Almost no Christian will say "I love money" because we know we shouldn't. So let me tell you what a LOVE of money is so that you can reflect on it and examine yourself...

A love of money literally means a greed for riches, being stingy in a desire to gain or hoard wealth. If you are not a giver then this is probably describing you. You may not consider yourself to be greedy or stingy, but you either cheerfully give or you are reluctant to give (stingy...love of money).

Again, my heart is not just for you to give more. I want you to have all that God has for you, and I believe part of that is a cheerfully giving heart!

So what about tithing.....yup, here we go. To those who don't believe in tithing, it's as bad as a swear word....don't tune me out....

I believe in tithing. I do it, I've done it since I got saved, and I'll never stop doing it. For those who don't know what tithing is, it is giving a tenth of all that you gain or earn to God. In the OT there were times where the tithe was in grain or animals (sometimes because they didn't rely on money, they instead traded goods). For us today the tithe is in money.

We first see tithing in Genesis 14...before the law. It started under grace by Abraham....you know the guy whom all of the promises we claim for our lives were given to. Funny how Christians are quick to claim the promises given to Abraham but not the heart of giving to the Lord that Abraham started.

Abraham gave a tenth of ALL that was gained to Melchizedek, the high priest. This was a voluntary offering to the Lord....it was because of the Lord that there was increase to give from! This was not a law being created, but a precedent was being set by a father in the faith.

Melchizedek was the high priest, not a descendent of Levi, not under the law, but Abraham somehow, someway.....determined to give a tenth to God through the high priest. Who is our high priest today....Jesus!

Abraham must have passed on the idea of the tithe to his family, in Genesis 28 we see Jacob, Abraham's son, commit to giving a tenth of everything to the Lord.

See what we refer to today is not the tithe that was established in the law but the tithe that was established by the heroes of the faith by their generous, giving hearts. Tithing is NOT about being bound to the law....we are free from the law! Tithing is about Jesus....as Abraham gave to his high priest, we give to OUR High Priest...JESUS! It's still for today.

Let's shift gears.....we are saved by grace through faith....right?

When we place our trust, hope, and belief in Jesus we are saved, we become a child of God. According to the book of Romans we are no longer a slave to sin but a slave to righteousness. We are no longer our own, we were bought with a price, we belong to Jesus.

Jesus is Savior but Jesus is also LORD. If He is really Lord, master, the one to whom we belong, then who is in charge? Who is calling the shots? HE IS.

OK, everyone is loving this, because all Christians claim that Jesus is Lord.....but what is He lord over?

1 Corinthians 8:6 (NKJV)

6 yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live.

Christians declare that He is Lord over all but is He really? In your life do you allow Jesus to be Lord over all? Of course not....we are sinful by nature, flesh vs spirit, good vs evil.....but it doesn't change the fact that Jesus IS Lord, we just try to do things our way sometimes.

Since Jesus is Lord over all, then we as His servants, must have a stewardship view of our lives, of our time, talents, finances, etc.

What does it mean to be a steward. Basically there are two ways to view our life and possessions. The First is as the owner, where my life and possessions belong to me. The second is as the steward, where my life and possessions belong to God and are to be used for His purposes.

If Jesus is your Lord, then you are a steward.....your responsibility is to manage His money! As Christians we believe in Jehovah Jireh...."the Lord will provide".....right? We believe that God is our provider so that means we will have what we NEED. That includes what we give to Him!

Philippians 4:19 (NKJV)

19 And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Yet many Christians don't tithe because they don't have "enough" I'm a firm believer that God always provides enough. Most times when we think He hasn't, we have just been bad stewards. It's not God's fault if you spend on your own pleasures instead of on His....don't blame HIM for shorting you!

Christianity is built on faith, we must have faith that God will provide.

Matthew 6:33 (NKJV)

33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

He's talking about needs being met, food, clothing, shelter.....if you seek God, His kingdom, His will, His desires.....your needs WILL be met, He WILL provide!

Not only will God provide, He will bless. If you are faithful to honor God with your finances, viewing them as His, you as the manager, giving faithfully, there WILL be blessing...

Proverbs 3:9-10 (NKJV)

9 Honor the Lord with your possessions,
And with the firstfruits of all your increase;
10 So your barns will be filled with plenty,
And your vats will overflow with new wine.

Honor God with the firstfruits of ALL your increase! God should always be first! That is what is wrong with the American church, that concept is missing. Either you put God first or you don't.

Many people don't give because they have enough money left over....the real problem is you don't have enough money left over because you don't give or you are not being a good steward!

We should honor God with the firstfruits. Firstfruits means means first, beginning, best, choice part. Not last, end, or leftovers! I don't believe in not having enough money to tithe.... if you put God first, then you REALLY don't have enough money to eat out or have a car payment you can't afford or house that is beyond your budget.

Many, many Christians don't tithe because they can't afford it. They say "I'll tithe when I make more money or I get x,y,z paid off".....can I be honest with you? NO MOST OF YOU WON'T!

If you can't tithe \$200 of \$2000 you make each month, what makes you think anything will change when you make \$4000? More money will not fix anything! You don't take my word for it. Take it from one of the wealthiest men in our country's history, John D Rockefeller, who said, "I never would have been able to tithe the first million dollars I ever made if I had not tithed my first salary, which was \$1.50 per week."

When you sit down to pay bills, don't you pay the most important bills first? What's more important than honoring God?

Some of you are offended.....I get it, money is a big deal and there is probably nothing that offends people more. See you can talk about sin on a Sunday morning because most believers think they are ok, no problems here....saved by the blood. But you start talking money, people get offended because they think they are doing it right.....

Again I share this stuff today because I care about you. I know we have a God who provides and I know we have a God who blesses! Read the scriptures....they are flooded with encouragements for giving and promises of blessing and increase!

Proverbs 11:24 (NKJV)

24 There is one who scatters, yet increases more;
And there is one who withholds more than is right,
But it leads to poverty.

Luke 6:38 (NKJV)

38 Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.”

Tithing is important. Not that it's required by the law, but it is required by grace! The 10% tithe is a baseline, it's something to gauge your giving by. Quite frankly it's just a starting point. We collect tithes and offerings here.

I want to tackle a couple common questions about tithing....

Should you tithe on net or gross income?

Abraham and Jacob gave of ALL their increase. Prov 3:9 says ALL your increase. If you believe God is your provider for ALL you have....then a true tithe would be 10% of your gross income....yes gross. You should give to God first, before the government. You earned that money that went to the IRS, Social Security, Medicaid, etc. It is part of your increase....don't believe me? Look at your W2.

Can I buy stuff for the church and subtract it from my tithe?

If you owe me \$100 dollars, do you think I'd be ok with you giving me \$20 cash and \$80 worth of cds and dvds you THINK I could use? NO!

Why do people do that with God. I think the church needs a new tv, I'll buy that and just deduct it from my tithe.....NO! Don't do that!

“But the board probably won't approve it and I really think we need it”

TOO BAD. That's not your call on how to spend God's money! You give, let those in charge of the finances decide.

Now if you want to buy that TV, go ahead....that's what we would call offering! Anything above and beyond the tithe.

Can I tithe my time instead of money?

INSTEAD? People say “Well, I'm involved. Isn't that enough”? Time is money, right?”

No....actually time is time and money is money. If you give lots of money it doesn't mean you don't need to serve....why would it be the other way around?? It goes back to stewardship....putting God first and trusting that if you give in honor to Him, He will provide all that you need!

Giving 10% of your income is a huge leap of faith for anyone. How do you start something great like tithing?

Zig Ziglar once said you don't have to be great to start, but you have to start to be great. Could you start tithing a full 10% of your income overnight? For many families, that's not so easy. Almost no one starts overnight..... It takes you managing a budget. The key is to start with something and draw a timeline of how and when you will be able to fully tithe.

Does my tithe have to go to this church?

No, it has to go to God. However this is God's house and our leadership is empowered by God to spend it to advance His Kingdom. I would caution against just giving it to ANY cause, make sure it's going to God, not just good....

But when you give to a cause that you believe in, such as a church, you support it, you invest in it.

Matthew 6:21 (NKJV)

21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

I believe in this church and the work that God has for us. My tithe goes here. In my budget, line 1 is tithe and line 2 is other giving. If I go somewhere else I give there too but I bring my tithe back here. I believe in tithing to your local church.....but that's up to you. It's between you and God.

Listen....all of this is between you and God. If you disagree with me, please don't be offended. Pray about it, ask the Lord because the real test in giving is that it's a heart issue....It's not about the amount. It's about the heart. We see that in:

Luke 21:1-4 (NKJV)

21 And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury, 2 and He saw also a certain poor widow putting in two mites. 3 So He said, "Truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all; 4 for all these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God, but she out of her poverty put in all the livelihood that she had."

It's the heart that really counts....this is why God want's us to give cheerfully, because we love Him, not because we have to, not because we are told to. He wants us to desire to give! It's a privilege!

We act out of our love for God, our relationship with God produces the desire to cheerfully give to Him. The whole reason for giving is to show love, there are promises but they are the **RESULT** of the giving heart not the **MOTIVATION**!

If you give you will be blessed, but if you give **TO** be blessed, it's probably not going to work out....how's your heart? Can you **TRUST** God with your finances?

Illustration: I heard a story of a missionary in Africa who received a knock on the door of his hut one afternoon. Answering, the missionary found a native boy holding a large fish in his hands. The boy said, "Reverend, you taught us what tithing is, so here. I've brought you my tithe." As the missionary gratefully took the fish, he questioned the boy. "If this is your tithe, where are the other nine fish?" At this, the boy beamed and said, "Oh, they're still back in the river. I'm going back to catch them now."

Now that is putting God's promise to the test.

I hope you will chose to tithe being obedient but that you will feel grateful to be able to give.

There will be sacrifices along the way—new clothes or toys or a new car. Instead, you will be trading worldly things, which are temporary, for things which are eternal.

I encourage you to pray and study about tithing.....choose to live without some things now and invest in things that will live forever.