Welcome All

Couple of things:

* Beginning this week, 1st & 3rd Tuesday 6pm-8pm – Pastoral Care Hours schedule @ placegracechurch@gmail.com
* Wednesday – Day of Fasting & Prayer
* Next week we’ll have merch in the Welcome Center for purchase, with more on the way

Prayer – Liz - Health & healing / Micheal – eye surgery healing / Henry - Home signing

Kristina Special

Thrive in 2025 Series

Pt. 4 Thriving Through Giving

Matt. 22:37-38 / Leviticus 27:30 / Proverbs 3:9-10

2/2/25

So far we’ve learned that in order to thrive in Christ in 2025 **we need to seek God 1st, have a repentant heart, develop a humble heart and add fasting & prayer to our lives.!** Today we’re going to continue in the foundational steps we need to take in order to no longer survive our walk in Christ, but to Thrive in it! Today we are going to look at how to “Thrive Through Giving”

Today we step into sensitive territory to explore a profound and often misunderstood principle of our faith – the act of tithing and offering. This practice, deeply rooted in biblical teachings, is not merely a financial transaction but a spiritual exercise that truly brings us closer to God's heart. It is an avenue through which we express our trust in His provision and our commitment to His work. As we delve into this topic, my prayer is that we would open our hearts to the transformative power of generosity.

We are completely aware that in today’s world, there have been so many examples of “man” making a mess of Gods financial plan, to which so many have been turned off of this opportunity of worship and generosity. With that said, on top of those negative things, there are so many things that compete for 1st place in our lives and what’s most important in our lives. From relationships, situations, to careers, to goals and our money, things are always trying to keep God out of 1st place.

Jesus tells us in...

* Matt. 22:37-38

***You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’ 38 This is the first and greatest commandment.***

I can actually say with honestly today that I love Mrs. Long with ALL of my heart. There is no other woman that I’m interested in. There are no distractions in my heart and mind that would cause me to put any other woman in front of her. I give all that I am, I have, and will ever have to her...How much more should my love and commitment to God be in ALL things?

**The Biblical Foundation of Tithing**

The concept of tithing dates back to the Old Testament. Giving to God started prior to God instituting tithing and making it a requirement to the Israelites. If you are involved in our monthly reading challenges, you read in Genesis this past month the story of Cain & Abel. In the story, Cain brought “some of his crops as a gift to the Lord”, but Abel brought the “best portions of the firstborn lambs from his flock”. The actual 1st time we see “tithe” in scripture is later in Genesis 14, we see Abraham gave a tenth of his spoils to a king and priest.

The command of tithing is found in Deuteronomy 14 & Leviticus 27, where we see the plan of tithing laid out by the God Himself speaking to the Israelites.

* v 30 *“One-tenth of the produce of the land, whether grain from the fields or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord and must be set apart to him as holy...v 32 Count off every tenth animal from your herds and flocks and set them apart for the Lord as holy.*

The tithe was set up by God 1st for obedience in who was 1st in their loves, but it was also a financial plan that was setup for Levites, the Priests and Temple workers so they would be taken care of. They were the Tribe chosen by God to care for the Temple and perform the purification rituals required by God. Thus, they couldn’t work and earn a living as the other Tribes...

The Lord reiterates this command of bringing your “tithe” to the Israelites to give a tenth of their produce as holy unto Him and the benefits in doings so!

This principle is reiterated in Malachi 3:10

* *Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so there will be enough food in my Temple. If you do,” says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies, “I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won’t have enough room to take it in! Try it! Put me to the test!*

Now when tithing is preached on, this is the verse everyone holds their hat on...where God invites His people to "bring the whole tithe into the storehouse," promising to "open the windows of heaven" and "pour out a blessing" so abundant that there will be "no room to contain it."

* Now let me clear the air, that nowhere in this scriptures does it say God will return the money you have given in tithe, or offering, in dollar form! He says He will pour our blessings so abundant, there’ll be no room to contain them! He doesn’t say specific how or where or when! But note this...He is calling us out...Test me! God is promising that if you are faithful and obedient in your giving, and putting Him 1st above ALL, that your life will be blessed beyond measure in more than just money, in life!

**Now in today’s world there are those who against tithing:**

Some say we are no longer under the Law of Moses and Jesus fulfilled the Law; therefore, the New Testament Church doesn’t need to abide by tithing anymore. They say we are to rely on the Spirit and to fulfill the Law of Christ which is to love God and our neighbors. Nonetheless, though tithing is mentioned in the New Testament (Mt 23:23; Heb 7:5-9), they say it is nowhere clearly stated as “Tithing” and not mentioned by name, so it is not an expectation for Christians. They believe that the New Testament teachings emphasize voluntary and cheerful giving rather than a mandated percentage. This perspective suggests that individuals should give according to their ability and willingness, rather than adhering to a rigid tithing requirement and actually use 2 Cor. 9:6-7 out of context as argument

Another significant reason for opposition to tithing is skepticism about how churches and religious institutions manage and utilize the funds they receive. In recent years, there have been high-profile cases of financial mismanagement, corruption, and lavish spending by some church leaders. These incidents have eroded trust and led some individuals to question whether their tithes are being used effectively and ethically.

* To which I want to clarify as your Pastor that the money you give here at PGC is allocated to the ministry and needs of this church. This is why we have quarterly business meetings so that there is transparency in the finances of the Church. Each individual who gives is not known by me, nor how much is given. I am aware of the finances of the church, but not on an individual basis, as the amount you give is between you and God.

**I would like to dispute this morning in favor of Tithing:**

It is true that Christians are not bound by the old Law of Moses. We are under the Law of Christ instead, keeping in step with the Spirit. As we saw earlier, giving of the best & tithing existed before the Law of Moses. Therefore, tithing is a biblical practice that precedes the Law and exists on its own quite apart from the Law.

Though it is true, the law requiring us to tithe has been nailed to the cross (Col 2:14 - *He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross.*), but that does not mean, however, that we can escape the principle of tithing, which is a part of the heritage of all Abraham’s descendants.

Now the conversation gets a little messy when we use the word “tithing” to denote any sort of giving. Christians who have grown accustomed to thinking of all giving as tithing can struggle with this biblical concept.

Tithes and offerings though they’re often spoken about hand-in-hand, are two different practices in generosity. One is done in love, obedience, gratitude and honor and one is done with generosity! So, it’s essential that we’re clear in our terminology.

**Tithe**

To tithe is to give a tenth or 10%. Right off the top. First thing paid. (First Fruits)

* The statistics around tithing indicate that fewer than one-quarter of any congregation tithes. A recent poll shows the average Christian gives around 2.5 percent of their income to churches. So, in that sense, most Christians do not tithe

Tithing is more than just a financial contribution—it is an expression of faith, stewardship, and commitment to the One who has blessed you with it to give. It's been said that “If God has a person’s wallet, that person has everything!”.

Money is a very fickle thing...We work hard for it and think because of that, it’s all ours. But for a Christian, that mindset must be rethought. As mentioned in the 1st part of this series in order to Thrive in ‘25, we must “seek” or put God first “in ALL things”. This includes our money. For the Christian, there should be a difference in attitude toward it.

As we saw in Matt. 22 the command to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind is an urgent call to check our own lives and is considered by Christ to be the greatest commandment. This means every area of our life, even the most uncomfortable of areas of our lives... including our finances. Do you, will you, love the Lord your God… with your wallet, by your giving?

Tithing carries a profound spiritual significance. It is an act of worship and obedience to God. It is a way to honor God with our resources and acknowledge His provision and blessings. By giving only a portion, or 10% of our increase, we demonstrate trust in God's abundance and express gratitude for what we have received.

When we tithe, we acknowledge that everything we have is a gift from God. It is an act of faith, declaring that we trust God to meet our needs. Philippians 4:19 reassures us, "And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus." By prioritizing God’s kingdom with our finances, we align ourselves with His promises and open our lives to His abundance.

Moreover, tithing fosters a sense of stewardship. It encourages a mindset of generosity and selflessness, challenging us to prioritize the needs of others and invest in the growth and sustainability of the church and other Kingdom based ministries.

**Offering:**

While tithing denotes a specific portion, offering encompasses a broader spectrum of giving – it reflects our heart’s generosity. It’s giving extra for a specific purpose... Offerings are considered gifts given outside of (or in addition to) a tithe.

* In the New Testament, Jesus highlights the value of sacrificial giving through the story of the widow's mite (Mark 12:41-44). Despite her poverty, the widow's small coins were more valuable in God's eyes than the large sums given out of abundance. This narrative underscores that the significance of our offerings lies not in the amount, but in the love and sacrifice they represent.

The truth is the wallet & people finances, is one of the hardest things for many Christians to give up. They’ll give up anything for Christ, but when it comes to their money...as mentioned, its theirs and they’ll be sure to keep it that way. Funny thing is, if God is 1st in our “Everything”, then we understand it’s not really ours in the big picture. In 1 Chronicles 29:14, we are reminded that we are not owners, but stewards, of all that we have, and that giving is a privilege:

* *But who am I, and who are my people, that we could give anything to you? Everything we have has come from you, and we give you only what you first gave us!*

We are blessed because of God and giving the best and out of love of what He asks really is investing into our spiritual lives and to the Kingdom of God!

Quickly back to the example of Cain and Abel, the Bible says that God accepted Abel’s offering but rejected Cains. Why? They both gave. But one gave his best and out of his love for God. The other one gave “some of his crops”. The Bible doesn’t say Cains were the first or the best of what He harvested. God deserves our best, correct? You see God looks at the condition of the heart first. He was looking at Cain’s heart before looking at the offering. Cain had “other things” holding 1st place in his heart. In this case it was sin lying at the door as he ended up killing his brother Abel.

But again, look at how God accepted Abel’s gift. It was accepted because it was given from a heart who had God 1st. It was given out of love and gratitude and was the best and first portion of what he had raised!

* Back to the example of Mrs. Long. I want to give her the best of everything I can because I love her and her alone! I don’t want to just get her “some” thing. I want to get her the “best” thing I can get.

Giving to God should never be about just giving something to God, but about giving to Him from a heart of gratitude the very first & best of what we have!

* **2nd Cor. 9:6-7**

***6 The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.***

Our church has always been blessed by the faithfulness of those who tithe and bring offerings. I personally thank you for being a blessing to our church.

**Closing:**

This message is not a “We need your money” campaign. Truth is our church has always been blessed by the faithfulness of those who tithe and bring offerings. I personally want to thank each and every one for your faithfulness in your giving and your trust in the church leadership in using wisdom and being good stewards of those blessings. Your faithfulness to God is a blessing to our church.

Again, though the word “tithing” may not be in the New Testament, it still stands today and should stand in our hearts, because tithing is about a heart issue.

* We pay our tithes because we believe God owns everything in all creation
* We pay our tithes because we want to show gratitude and love to our God
* We pay our tithes because it shows faith in God
* We pay our tithes because as it shows that God is my first love and deserves my best.

God has given us a wonderful gift in that tithing keeps me focused on from where my blessings flow. It will help us support the church and its mission and will even help us establish order in our own finances, helping us prosper!

Consider Proverbs 3:9-10 and the beauty of giving as an act of worship and is blessed by God:

* *Proverbs 3:9-10*

1. *Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops. 10 then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.*

**Practical Steps to Thriving Through Tithing and Offering**

Now that we understand the spiritual significance of tithing and offering, how do we practically incorporate these practices into our lives?

* Start with a Plan

Begin by prayerfully creating a budget that honors God first, setting aside your tithe before other expenses. Remember, tithing is not limited to financial resources; it includes your time, talents, and treasures. (Start “offering” with 1%)

* Give Cheerfully and Consistently

2 Corinthians 9:7 advises us... “for God loves a cheerful giver.” Approach tithing and offering with a joyful heart, and strive for consistency, trusting God to provide even when it seems challenging.

* Witness the Blessings

As you commit to tithing and offering, be attentive to the ways God blesses and multiplies your giving. These blessings may not always be financial; they can manifest as peace, opportunities, relationships, and spiritual growth.

Church, **thriving through giving in tithing and offering is a journey of faith that brings us closer to God's heart and aligns us with His purposes.** It is an invitation to experience God's abundance in ways that transcends material wealth. I pray that we would embrace this practice with joyful hearts, trusting in God's provision and celebrating the profound impact our generosity can make.

May we be known as a church that thrives not by what we keep, but by what we give. Amen.