

Is Tithing the Standard for Christian Giving?

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Myth #9: Tithing is the standard for Christian giving. And I don't doubt that many of you have bought into that myth. We get people here that come to the church all the time and they're convinced, tithing is God's standard for giving. It's not. Let me just tell you that right up front. It's not. Look, many like to appeal to Malachi 3:8. "Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me, but you say, 'how have we robbed You?'" And of course it mentions tithes there.

So people bring that along into the New Testament and they say yes, when Jesus was talking to the Pharisees, they tithe of their annis and their mint and their cummin, and Jesus says these things ought you to have done. What I would have you to remember is this: Before that veil was rent in two, Jesus also observed the Passover. He also told lepers that were healed to go show themselves to the priesthood. He respected the old covenant system.

But when you enter into the New Testament, you find not a hint of tithing ever mentioned. When these apostles went out to the Gentiles who did not have the Old Testament, they never mentioned tithing. Now let me tell you this, tithing - in other words 10% - was not even the standard in the Old Testament.

You say, what? That's what we've always been taught. Yeah, by the shysters and by the health-wealth prosperity guys, and sometimes by just misguided, unbiblical good men. But listen, I'm not going to get into a full deal with tithing right now, but I wanted to read a short little blurb here from John MacArthur. MacArthur says, "You pay 10% to the Levites (that's a tithe) to them as they operated on behalf of God in the government. You pay 10% to take care of the national festivals which there were many. Then you paid another 10% every third year which went to the poor and the widows. So if you broke that down, you were about 23 and a third percent per year. Now, what that was was an income tax system. That was a system of taxation to fund the government and its religious activities and its welfare needs, so when people today say we want to tithe now like they did in the Old Testament, they can't stop at 10%. They've got to give 23.3% to start with. In addition to that, you paid half shekel temple tax every year.

In addition to that, if you had a field, you had to harvest the field in a circle and leave the corners open to the poor. It was a profit-sharing plan. If you dropped a bale of hay off your wagon on the way to the barn, you had to leave that for the poor. So (he estimates) you actually gave under the Old Testament system about 25%."

Now, if you ever came from the circles that loved Malachi 3:8 - you say, brother, you like to be biblical. Why don't you prove all this from the Old Testament? Because I don't want to do a big study on tithing right now. But just hear me out here. Malachi 3:8 does not say: Will man rob God by not giving tithes? It says, for one, the "tithes" is plural. But two, it says tithes and offerings. You see, the law demanded that you give so much, which according to MacArthur was about 25%. You didn't even get into the free will offerings. That was over and above. And God said you robbed Me not just with regards to the tithes - you robbed Me with regards to the tithes and the contributions and the offerings. Those free will offerings. And listen, the Gentiles - these guys at Corinth who were Gentiles. They didn't have the Old Testament Scriptures. When

Paul came in there, he said, in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, he says I'm going to convince these Corinthians to give. If he had law to appeal to, he would have appealed to it.

But you notice, dead silence. What did he appeal to? He appealed to the example of the Macedonians who, hearts burning with love, you just couldn't keep them from giving. Guess what else he appealed to? The example of Jesus Christ who being rich became poor so we who were poor would become rich. He used the manna as an example. Remember? Nobody had too much and nobody had too little? He talks about God loving a cheerful giver. He talks about this rule of basically if you sow plentifully and bountifully, you'll reap bountifully, but if you sow sparingly... he told that. He also said and by your giving you supply their need. So there's that. That can cheer your soul when you give. You provide people's needs. He also said if you give, God is going to be thanked. It glorifies Him. He also said if you give, the people that you give on behalf of are going to feel for you and they're going to love you and they're going to appreciate you and they're going to pray for you. He appeals to all these things. Again and again and again and over and over and over, he appeals to anything he can think of to appeal, and he does not appeal to tithing. Never to the Gentiles is it appealed to.

So if you've got this mindset that 10% - what are you saying? How much should we give? I don't know, but the widow gave everything. Zacchaeus gave half. And the early Christians were giving their lands. What's the standard? Brethren, I'm not going to be your conscience. But if you come in and you write out a check: \$118.23 Brethren, that's being pretty legalistic. That does not seem like a check that is love-driven or that is a cheerful giver given. (incomplete thought) Now I understand if you sold something and you got exactly that amount and you intended to give it and so you give it like when the land was sold. There were some of those folks there that didn't exactly give all of it as they promised they would. But you understand what I'm saying. Brethren, you don't want to have your giving be legal - let it be love-driven, cheerful given. God loves a cheerful giver. So I know I've gone long.

The last one here is this: Myth #10: If only God would provide, we could get the work done.