

HOW MUCH SHOULD I PUT IN THE OFFERING PLATE?

Here we are—the last sermon in our series on “God, Giving, and Gifts.” In way of review, here is **some** of what we have looked at so far. We started with the truth that God **wants you** before He wants your money!

Does the Bible say that? It certainly does—a number of times! In fact, it is one of those “threads” that are woven throughout the NT! Jesus taught that truth when He made statements like “**No man can serve two masters**: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Mt 6:24). And “...If any man will come after me, **let him deny himself**, and take up his cross daily, and follow me” (Lk 9:23). And “But seek ye **first the kingdom of God**, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Mt 6:33).

Jesus isn’t **the only One** who spoke of God’s desire that we give ourselves whole-heartedly to Him. Here are just a few of the many times that God tells us that **through the teaching Paul**. “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye **present your bodies a living sacrifice**, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (Rom 12:1).

“For the love of Christ constraineth [compels and motivates] us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: ¹⁵ And that He died for all, **that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them**, and rose again” (II Cor 5:14-15). And the Macedonian believers were commended because they “first **gave their own selves to the Lord**” (II Cor 8:5).

I’m going to say it again: God **wants you** before He wants your money! **But**...a reluctance to give **money to God and His work** is an indicator that God doesn’t have all of you!

Next, we looked at some **declarations God** makes about money and things. God **owns all** things...God **gives us** what we have...and God wants us **to be givers!**

We then talked about what Jesus meant when He told us to **lay up treasures in heaven**—not on earth! Laying up treasures in heaven is not just about spending **our money** with an eternal perspective; it is also about how we use **the time—and talents**—that God has given us. Do we use our time and talents for **us and our** “kingdom”—or do we use them for **God and His** kingdom?

And then we looked at **reasons to give money** to the church. I listed those for you last week so I’m not going to give them to you again—except for one we focused on last Sunday. What was that? **Putting money in the offering plate is a way to grow your faith!**

How does putting money in the offering plate **grow our faith**? Because if we have a **pre-determined amount** that we are going to give—and give that amount “no matter what”—there will be times when it will be **hard** to give! But when we **give anyway**—even when, humanly speaking, it “doesn’t make sense”—we will see God provide in ways that we wouldn’t otherwise see.

What happens if you **don’t have** a pre-determined amount that you are going to give no matter what?

--If you don’t have a plan in place of **before** a financial trial comes, you probably won’t give anything when the trial comes!

--And if you don’t **give anything when the trial comes**, I believe you are passing up an opportunity to see God work!

How much should that pre-determined amount be? As promised, that is what we are going to look at this morning!

1. Some of God’s people tithed before the law of Moses

It wasn’t a common practice—and it **wasn’t required**—but we have two well-known OT men giving tithes before the time of Moses.

A. Abraham gave tithes to Melchizedek. We see that in Genesis 14; please turn there. The context is regarding Abraham’s nephew Lot who was captured along with some others from Sodom. Notice vs 12. Abraham hears about it, gathers up his servants, and successfully rescues Lot from the people who had captured him. Now look at vss 17-20.

So, Abraham—in an act of thankfulness to God—gave tithes (meaning a tenth) of the “battle spoils” to Melchizedek—the priest of God.

B. Jacob pledged a tenth to God

We see that in Gen 28; notice vss 20-22.

Neither Abraham nor Jacob were instructed by God to give God a tenth—it was something that they just decided to do on their own.

That changed, though, and under the leadership of Moses...

2. God's people were required to tithe under the law of Moses

We're in Genesis; let's turn now to Leviticus, chapter 27. We know that God gave Moses the Ten Commandments, but it is important to know that God gave Moses ***much more than*** the Ten Commandments! Moses received instructions on how to ***build the tabernacle***...and the different types of ***animal sacrifices*** God required... and instructions ***about tithing!***

Please follow along as I read Leviticus 27:30-32. We're not going to turn there, but there are also references to the tithe in Numbers 18:26-32...Deuteronomy 12...and Deuteronomy 14 and II Chronicles 31.

How serious was God about the tithe? For the Jew not to give the tithe was to ***rob God!*** Does the Bible say that? It sure does—and God uses ***those very words!***

Malachi 3:8-10 “Will a man ***rob God?*** Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? **In tithes and offerings.** ⁹Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye ***have robbed me***, even this whole nation. ¹⁰**Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse**, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”

Quite a ***pronouncement***—and quite a ***promise!*** But...***neither apply to us!***

Why? Because... **3. God's people are no longer under the law of Moses!**

Although there is ***ample Biblical proof*** that NT believers are ***no longer under the law of Moses***, there is still an incredible number of believers that ***think we are!*** This could be a sermon—or series of sermons—all on its own and there are numerous passages we can turn to. We will look at just three.

Let's turn now to Romans 6. First, we have... A. The pronouncement. Look at vss 14-15.

Pretty straightforward, isn't it? Twice it says we—as believers—are not ***under the law!***

What is the law? It is not talking about the “law of the land.” Don't go through town—where the posted speed is 25 mph—at 55 mph! If you decide to do that and get pulled over, do not say to the officer, “You can't give me a ticket because my Pastor says I am not under the law!”

The “law” that is being referred to is the ***law of Moses***. We are not under what Moses wrote to the children of Israel. That means we are not under the Ten Commandments...or the dietary restrictions...or the temple sacrificial system of worship...or ***the tithe!***

Not only does God through Paul make this pronouncement, God also gives us... B. A picture

Look at Romans 7, follow along as I read vss 1-3. What is the ***picture?*** A woman can't be married to two different men at the same time! If she is, she is an adulteress. But...if her ***first*** husband dies...she ***is not*** an adulteress if she marries a different man.

Now vs 4. We are dead to the law. The law is no longer our husband; we have a ***new husband***—Christ!

A guy named **Sumner Osborne wrote**: “The first husband stands for the authority of the law and the second husband for Christ risen. To be under both at the same time Paul shows to be as bad as a woman having two husbands at once. But the **Christian is not under both the law and Christ**. Rather is he dead with Christ and no longer under the authority of the law....” (“The Christian and The Law,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 109, Jul 1952; 239).

Not only is there ***the pronouncement*** that we are not under the law—and a ***picture*** demonstrating that—there is also... C. The passing of the law. We're in Romans, turn now to II Corinthians 3:6. “Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament....” Is “the new testament” a reference to the ***second half*** of our Bibles? No; Paul is not talking about Matthew through Revelation because they hadn't been written yet!

Paul is talking about **the new covenant**—the new way of God dealing with His people—and comparing it to the old way (the law of Moses).

How do we know? Look at vs 7. The “ministration of death, written and engraven in stones” is obviously a reference to the Ten Commandments. In vs 9, the law is called “the ministration of condemnation” because that is what the law does—shows us our sin and that we are condemned.

Now vs 11. The old covenant—the law—is done away with! It has passed away; it is no longer binding! **Galatians 3:24-25** “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵ But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.”

The schoolmaster is the law—and we are no longer under the law!

The bottom line is this: I would be mishandling God’s Word if I tell you that you **don’t have to obey** the dietary laws...or Sabbath laws...or sacrificial laws because you are not under the law—but that you **do have** to obey the **tithe part of the law** and give 10% to the church! We are not under the law—and consequently **are not required** to give 10%. So how much **should we** give? Let’s consider next what the NT says about giving.

4. The NT does not say how much to give!

The word “tithe” appears in our KJ Bibles 32 times—25 of which are in the Old Testament. Of the 7 times in the NT, 4 of those are in Hebrews—and refer back to OT giving under the law. Jesus used the word “tithe” 3 times: once in the parable of the Pharisee and publican that both went to the temple to pray; the other two times I have on your outline. You will notice right away how similar they are.

A. Did Jesus endorse tithing?

Mt 23:23 “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay **tithe** of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.”

Luke 11:42 “But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye **tithe** mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.”

In a nutshell, Jesus is saying that it is **okay to tithe on everything you own**—right down to your spices—but don’t leave off the more important things like judgment, mercy, faith, and the love of God!

But...Jesus was speaking **to the Jews who were still under the law** because He had not died and rose again yet! Consequently, they were still under the law until Jesus’ death and resurrection brought an end to the law of Moses.

B. Did Paul teach tithing to the church?

No! In fact, Paul—the one God used to write most of the **instructions to NT church**—did not use the word “tithe” even once! Not only that, even though he said quite a bit **about giving**, he never once mentioned **an amount!** I obviously can’t **show you** the verses because there **aren’t any**—and I’m pretty sure you don’t want me to take the time to read aloud the 13 books that Paul wrote to prove it to you!

Lastly, let’s consider... **5. NT principles to ponder when formulating a giving plan**

So if Paul **didn’t teach** that NT believers are required to tithe—and if he **didn’t mention an amount** that we should give—what **did he teach** about giving? Way too much to cover in one sermon! You’re in II Cor 3; please turn back a few pages to I Cor 16.

Vs 1. The context, then, is that Paul is collecting money for the saints. We know from other verses that the saints are poverty-stricken Jews that were living in Jerusalem. So even though this gives guidelines for a **special offering**, there are principles Paul teaches regarding **giving in general**.

A. Giving should be regular

Vs 2. First, notice how the verse ends. Paul does not want to do “fund-raising” when he gets there—he wants the offering to be ready to go! The way to ensure the offering will be ready when he gets there is to have it brought in week-by-week. We see that in the beginning of the vs: “Upon the first day of the week...”

Why the first day? Because that is when the early church **gathered to worship!**

Does it mean that we have to put money in the offering plate **every** week. No; not necessarily—especially if you don’t get paid every week! But it does mean that we should plan to give on a **regular basis**—not “hit and miss” or when we “get around to it!” I’m pretty simple minded. If you get paid weekly, give weekly; if monthly; give monthly.

B. Giving should be universal

Vs 2. “...let every one of you...” It wasn’t just the rich that were supposed to give—Paul was encouraging **all of them** to give. What about children? Should they learn to give? **Why not?** I believe the best time to learn is when your child—usually when they are a teen—gets their first job.

C. Giving should be proportionate

Vs 2. We see that in the middle of vs 2 “...as God hath prospered him...” What does that mean? Simply this: if God **prospered you** and you earned a lot, you should **give a lot!** But...if you get sick one week and only make half of what you usually do, you aren’t expected to give the **same amount** that you did the week before!

That is why giving a **certain percentage** makes more sense than giving a particular **dollar amount**. I’m not even sure how you would give proportionately—as God has prospered you—if you didn’t give a **certain percentage!**

What is a **good percentage** of your income to give? That is obviously between you and God, but **10%** is a good place to **start**. Why do I say that? Because the Jews **were required to give** that much and God holds us to a **higher standard under grace** than the Jews had under the law!

Some of you are familiar with George Mueller—a man who lived in the 1800s and cared for thousands of orphans in England. I read recently that he gave **86% of his** income to the Lord’s work! That is obviously giving generously—and sowing bountifully!

Two more principles, and then we are done. Turn now to II Corinthians 9. Look at vs 7.

Here we see that... D. Giving should be purposeful

We see that in the first part of the verse, don’t we? “Every man as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give...” That means I can’t decide **for you** how much you should give—and you can’t **decide for me!** Each of us **needs to decide for ourselves** what we should give. But that decision should not be made **on our own**. We should want **God to direct us** in our giving and when He does, we need to purpose in our heart that **we will do** what He impresses on our heart!

What about when a **financial trial comes?** As mentioned a couple of times already, if we want our faith to grow, I believe we need to stick with giving what we previously **agreed with God** to give! “Every man as he purposeth in his heart...”

Notice what else the verse says. We should not give **grudgingly**—and we should not give **out of necessity**—meaning being coerced! God loves a **cheerful giver** and would rather we give a smaller amount with a **joyful attitude** than a larger amount **grudgingly!**

Lastly, E. Giving should be prompted by love for God

Vs 15. “Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.” Unspeakable means “indescribable”—a good word to use because it is hard to put into words all that we have in Christ!

Now look at II Cor 8:7. The end of the verse says, “...see that ye abound in **this grace** also.” What grace? **The grace of giving!** Just as you abound in these other things, abound in giving, too! Why? He gives the “why” in vs 9.

“For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ....” ‘You know the undeserved goodness and kindness that God has extended to you.’

“...though He was rich...” —Jesus, in Heaven, was rich! He was rich in **position** because as God, everything belonged to Him! He was rich in **praise** because all the angels obeyed and worshipped Him. He was rich in **power** because He spoke the world into existence—and could do whatever He chose to do!

“...yet for **your sakes** He became poor...”

He became poor—He volunteered to give up His position...and praise...and power—for **our sakes!**

Jesus “becoming poor” involved more than just putting up with the inconveniences of being human.

--It was more than giving up His **home on the throne** in heaven for a carpenter’s life on earth.

--It was more than giving up the **praise of angels** for only a few friends on earth.

--And it was more than giving up the **ability to command anyone to do anything** in exchange for an obedient life to human parents while on earth.

His poverty on earth involved giving up way more than that, didn’t it?

--It involved **hatred and violence** from those He created—instead of kindness and love.

--It involved **mockery and rejection** from those He came to die for—instead of adoration and praise.

--And it involved **God’s wrath**—for our sin—being poured out on Him!

Aren’t you thankful that Jesus gave **everything**—not just 10%—when He came to earth to die for us?

And so—in light of what Jesus gave for us—we should be motivated to give to Him!

So what would God have us do in light of what we’ve heard this morning?

1. First, examine your **attitude** toward giving. If you bristle at the thought and get all defensive, it’s pretty safe to say you haven’t given yourself wholly to the Lord! God wants you before He wants your money!

2. Second, be honest about **why** you give. If you give in hopes of gaining forgiveness of sins, you are giving for the wrong reason! Proverbs 21:27 says, “The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination: how much more, when he bringeth it with a wicked mind?”

Is there anything more wicked than saying, “No; I don’t want Jesus as my Saviour! I want to buy my way into heaven instead!”

3. Third, compare **your giving** to what God says about giving.

--Do you give regularly—or is it hit and miss?

--Do you give proportionately?

--Do you give when it is sometimes hard—when it doesn’t make sense—trusting God to meet your needs!

--Do you give out of a heart of love for God?

4. Fourth, **pray about** your giving! God wants to guide you in all areas of your life—including your giving!