

# The Truth About Tithing Today



## Managing GOD's Money



- Preamble
- Tithing: Why
- Tithing: Not Today's Biblical Standard
- Giving Under The New Covenant: Grace Giving (Keeping)
- Grace Giving Pays Pastors Proper Wages
- Grace Giving Funds The Great Commission
- Tithing: Why Practiced Today
- Tithing: When Reintroduced
- Giving To God: Summary

---

### Preamble

A tithe is one-tenth. Tithing under the Mosaic law was Israel's requirement to present two yearly tithes of 10% each, of agricultural produce and livestock, and a third tithe of 10% every three years, of agricultural produce only. Each tithe had a specific purpose. The total tithing requirement was 23.3%.

Tithing outside Israel was common in those times as a 10% government tax.

Many Messiah followers come to me, especially since December 2008, with this question:

*My pastor, elder, ministry official, say I should tithe to church or ministry on my credit card. However, I am carrying a balance on the card. These leaders say that is no excuse, I must tithe. They quote*

## The Truth About Tithing Today



*Malachi 3:10 and tell me not to rob God. When I tithe, they say, God will bless you.*

I state emphatically, tithing does not apply today, is not today's Biblical standard. Jesus' death and resurrection fulfilled the tithing law.

It is clear in the Scriptures why tithing isn't relevant today. I am so confident that for years in the Frequently Asked Questions on my website,

<http://www.managinggodsmoney.com>, I offered \$1,000 to anyone who can show me, in a recognized Bible, where, after Jesus' death and resurrection, tithing was taught or practiced; that offer stands.

Read the Bible with an open mind that's directed by the Holy Spirit, and you will see plainly that tithing does not apply today. The Levitical Tithe, Numbers 18:21-32, (10%), and the Aaronic Priesthood, Exodus 30:30, were Old Covenant arrangements God introduced to Israel under the Mosaic Law. This tithe of agricultural products and livestock served two purposes. It sustained the Levites, who had no inheritance in the Promised Land. It provided priests with animals to sacrifice in their temple duties as intercessors for Israel.

Farmers in Israel paid two other tithes under the Law: the Festive Tithe (10%) consumed by the giver in God's presence, and the Poor Tithe (10% every three years) for the disadvantaged in Israel. The yearly tithes of agricultural produce and livestock Israel had to provide was 23.3%.

Despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, several folks follow blindly incorrect teaching and application of tithing. Tithing, introduced under the Mosaic Law, was for Israel alone. It related to agricultural crops and livestock only, not money. Tithing, apart from the Mosaic Law, was an

# The Truth About Tithing Today

established taxation form. When Israel demanded a king, Samuel cautioned them that the King would require a tithe (1 Samuel 8:15).

Understanding Bible teachings on tithing is central to managing God's money for His glory. Be like the Bereans in Acts 17:11, check this topic.

To understand tithing, we must look at why God introduced it to Israel. Why it stopped, who reinstated it, and when?

## Tithing: Why

God did not give the Levites a specific geographic area in the Promised Land, but assigned them towns and pasturelands from other Tribes' allotments (Numbers 35:2-3). In these assigned towns, Levites lived, farmed, and helped other tribes worship God (Numbers 35). They received tithes in these towns, where most tithes were stored. Only a small portion was stored in the Tabernacle's storehouse.

Not only did Levites work in the Tabernacle and on the land, but they ran the government (Deuteronomy 17:8-9, 21:5; 2 Chronicles 34:12-13).

To provide for the Levites, the poor, widows, orphans, and to teach Israel to celebrate, commune with, and revere Him, God introduced three tithes:

1. The *Levitical tithe* in Numbers 18:21-32 called for all tribes except Levi to give one-tenth of their **agricultural crops and livestock** to the Levites in return for the Levites' work in the Tent of Meeting. Levites had to tithe from their tenth.
2. Donors consumed in God's presence the *Festive tithe* of **agricultural crops and livestock** (Deuteronomy 14:23-27). Its purpose was to teach Israel to worship God, to learn to fear or revere Him, and to celebrate with Him and the community.
3. The *Poor tithe*, in Deuteronomy 14:28-29, **agricultural crops only**, once every three years (equal to 3.3% each year), went to feed the Levites, foreigners, widows, and orphans.

# The Truth About Tithing Today



These three tithes totalling 23.3% were specific to Israel and dealt with Israel's religious and social arrangements at a specific time.

## Tithing: Not Today's Biblical Standard

Hebrews 7 and 8 tells us that Jesus' death and resurrection

fulfilled the tithing law. Hebrews 7:23-28 says:

*Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. Such a high priest meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself. For the law appoints as high priests men who are weak; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever.*

Today, we do not need intermediaries between us and Jesus. We do not need animals for animal sacrifice. God sent His one and only Son, Jesus the Messiah, whose blood was shed for all our sins, yesterday, today, and tomorrow. His death and resurrection fulfilled the tithing law.

Jesus replaced the temporary Aaronic office of High Priest with a permanent priesthood (Hebrews 7:24); Jesus is the High Priest according to the Order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 5:4-6). Besides, each believer is a

# The Truth About Tithing Today

priest (1 Peter 2:5-9).

## Giving Under The New Covenant: Grace Giving (Keeping)

Under the New Covenant, giving to God flows from each person's relationship with Messiah--from lives surrendered to Messiah.

We see examples of surrendered lives in the early church in Acts 2:41-47 and Acts 4:35 to Acts 5:24, and in 2 Corinthians 8 & 9.

Jesus' comments to the Rich Young Ruler in Matthew 19:15-30 to give everything away to follow Him, describe perfectly a surrendered heart; so too does His comments about the widow's gift in Mark 21:41-44.

We can summarize the essence of Jesus' message as follows: Loosen your grip on possessions, open your palms, and present everything to Jesus, so He decides what He should keep in His Kingdom, and what you should use.

Our heart condition is the central issue here. Do we accept God's sovereignty over all possessions we use? Are we prepared to hold them loosely and make all available to Him? Believers have nothing, so we can't give God anything but our hearts. Apostle Paul says: *For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.*" (Romans 8:13-14).

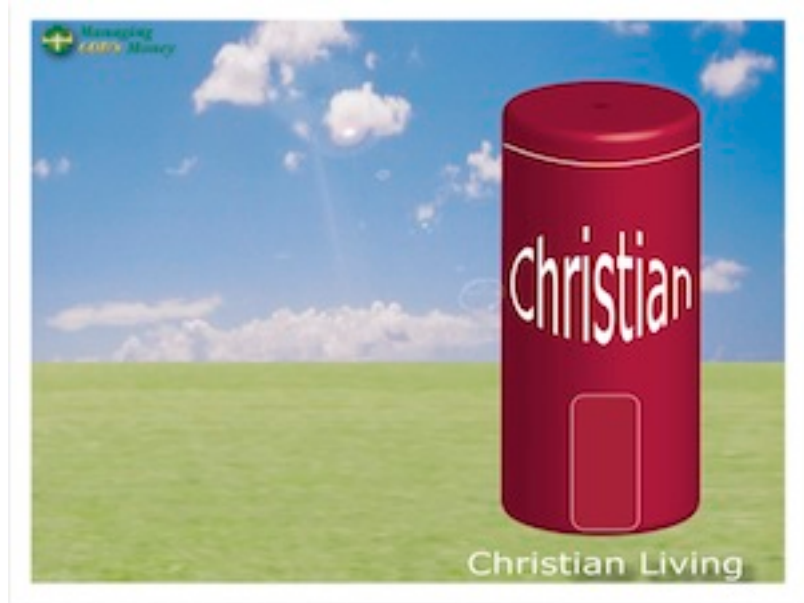
In the first Christian giving reference after Pentecost, in the early church, as needs arose, believers shared what they had directly with each other (Acts 2:44-45). They did not tithe. Shortly after, believers brought gifts to the apostles to share (Acts 4:35, 37; 5:2). They did not tithe. Later that practice changed and individuals started to fulfill their individual responsibilities toward God. They started to practice *grace giving*, which I call *keeping*, because it accepts God's ownership of everything and my stewardship. We see the keeping lifestyle in these four Scripture passages:

1. The selfless giver (2 Corinthians 8:2-7)
2. The hilarious giver (2 Corinthians 9:7-8)
3. The regular giver (1 Corinthians 16:2)
4. The sharing and hospitable giver (Romans 12:13)

# The Truth About Tithing Today

Keeping aims to maximize funds Jesus *keeps* for His work and minimize amounts we use. We achieve it by:

- (a) Surrendering every area of our lives to Jesus--giving ourselves first, like the Macedonians in 2 Corinthians 8: 1-7.
- (b) Applying His ownership and our stewardship to our possessions.
- (c) Praying continually to seek Jesus' allocation of funds
- (d) Obeying His directions.



## Grace Giving Pays Pastors Proper Wages

Since tithing does not apply today, how should we pay our pastors? How should churches and ministries fund their expenses? Apostle Paul tells us to pay our pastors (1 Corinthians 9:1-19), not mechanically from a tithe, but from grateful hearts (2 Corinthians 9:7). We must seek the Lord's will continually; He will direct our paths. But, we shouldn't respond to crafty manipulation from leaders who seek to fund raise to do their wills. Mull over this Mother Teresa's quote:

As Missionaries of Charity, we are here to help the poorest of the poor in whatever form that takes, which is always Christ in His distressing disguise. We don't accept even one rupee for the work we do, as we do our work for Jesus. He looks after us. If He wants something done, He gives us the means. If He doesn't provide us with the means, then He doesn't want that work done. (Mother Teresa, *A Simple Path*, (New York: Random House, 1995) pp. 64-65

Believers to whom I speak individually or in a group, tell me they believe God owns 100% of everything and they are His steward. Yet, many believe they should tithe. They have not studied New Covenant teachings. As with my earlier walk with the Lord, they hear the tithing teaching so often,

© 2000-2012, Michel A. Bell. May be copied **in full** by churches and Christian non profit groups. Otherwise may be copied only with permission from the author.

[www.managinggodsmoney.com](http://www.managinggodsmoney.com) 6

# The Truth About Tithing Today

especially when churches and ministries fund raise, they believe it. Still, there is good news: every person I know who studies New Covenant teaching on giving understands tithing does not apply, simply because they do not see it taught or practiced by early after Jesus' death and resurrection.

Jesus wants us in a personal relationships with Him where we place all money and belongings at His disposal and then follow His direction to use and share them. Yet, many folks withhold parts of their lives and live in at least two silos. In one silo, they alone decide how to use God's 90%. And in the other, they give Him a tithe or less--in North America the average is much less. That's why I define tithing as *a guilt relieving way to spend God's 90% without His approval.*

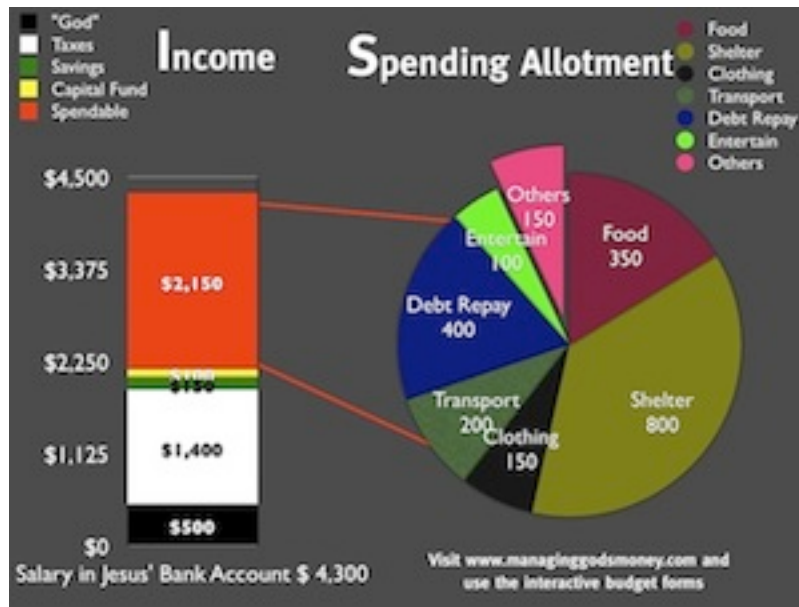
## Grace Giving Funds The Great Commission

It doesn't end there. Often, when folks give God this 10% or less mechanically, they ask for something in return--an attitude that reinforces the selfish lifestyle practiced in North America.

As the Spirit leads, ask Jesus to help you stop seeking stuff for you, stop focusing on your circumstances, and seek to get to know Him better and become more like Him. Then, His will might become your wish.

Develop the mindset that all funds you get go to God's bank account. Write, "God," on the back of your credit and debit cards. Pray continually; ask Jesus to show you how to divide His possessions you manage. Don't wait until Sunday or when an organization asks for funds. Invest time with God regularly to learn His way to share His funds. Live in one silo as a Christian; surrender all to Jesus.

# The Truth About Tithing Today



Each believer should use time, talents, and funds God gives him, to further the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). This includes giving to your Bible-believing church, selected Christ-centered Christian charities, the poor, less fortunate, and others, *as the Lord leads*.

Know your local church's life, learn its needs, ask God to show you the right responses. Don't let pastors, leaders, or others pressure you to fund building or programs God does not lay on your heart. When God wants buildings built and programs funded, He provides funding through willing hearts He gives to His people.

Many churches and Christian charities have been manipulating believers, preying on their naivety and greed. Do not give God's money to any group unless God tells you. Don't give under compulsion. These groups appeal to the tithing attitude; they suggest you give a bit to God and claim more. That's not biblical! You do not need these groups' intervention to access God; you need Jesus.

Beware; don't give to a group when it tells you to give it funds so it can do something for you. Rather, ask God to show you where to give His funds. Another growing practice Christian charities use is to ask you to give on credit cards. They do not teach you the proper use of a credit card, and so they don't tell you to pay your balance fully each month; rather they tell you to give them funds and then believe for a *financial miracle*. Yet, putting funds on credit cards give merchants some of those funds, wasting God's money--they ignore this! Then again, likely you will fall deeper in debt by giving on your credit card while the ministry gets more money. Stop; do not give unless God tells you.

# The Truth About Tithing Today

## Tithing: Why Practiced Today

So why is tithing practiced today when it is clear from the Bible it does not apply? It is easy to understand. Perhaps! It fits with North American me-centered Christianity, and is a good fund raising base, when presented as a seed for God to return a blessing? Maybe? As a hook? Probably. Ignorance?

The prosperity gospel proponents use several Bible verses as hooks to catch the poor, uneducated, greedy, and ignorant. Tithing, using Malachi 3:10 as bait, seems to be one of their favourites:

*Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.*

Wittingly or unwittingly, these charlatans ignore the context. Malachi 3:10 refers specifically to priests mentioned in Malachi 1:6-8, who were presenting defiled animals to the Lord--Israel's tithes to Levites were unfit. In turn, the priests who received these tithes, presented them to God, though the animals were blemished and defective. They ought to know the law! In Malachi 1:12-15, God cursed the priests for this. Then, in Malachi 3:10, God tells the priests that if Israel tithed as required by the law, and the priests presented proper tithes to God. He will bless Israel as He promised in Deuteronomy 11:26.

Malachi 3:10 does not mean individuals today should send money as a tithe to churches, and to health-wealth-prosperity gospel preachers, and then God will pour out blessings on the givers! No, it does not! Here, Malachi refers specifically to God's promises of blessings and curses in Deuteronomy 11. But, seductive prosperity messages, and manipulation by wealthy TV preachers appeal to the greed and ignorance in their supporters who continue to give what they don't have to gain a bonanza. Clearly, an unbiblical practice.

Then again, I think, like me, many folks grew up hearing about tithing and have not studied the subject. So too, I think many God fearing sincere pastors have not studied the matter fully. Still, it is good to know a few preach this truth! Certainly it is tough to be a pastor to say to the

# The Truth About Tithing Today



congregation, *we are not under law and you do not have to give! However, understand, if you do not give, you will need to account to God, not to me.* This is not a pretty message, but happily, some preach it.

We must focus on our relationship with our Messiah.

## Tithing: When Reintroduced

According to the Catholic Encyclopedia: "... The earliest positive legislation on the subject seems to be contained in the letter of the bishops assembled at Tours in 567 and the canons of the Council of Macon in 585.... "

## Giving To God: Summary

I want to stress, I am not saying tithing is the start of giving, a minimum, a "training wheel." Partial obedience of God's word is disobedience. We start with God owning 100% and we owning nothing. Then, through our continuing relationship with Jesus, He shows us how much we should take from His 100% and how much He wants (He will keep) for His work.

It is not about percentages, but about our hearts. Study 2 Corinthians 8 to see the Macedonians' hearts.

After Jesus' resurrection, you won't find one instance in the New Testament where someone in the early church taught or practiced tithing. Like many folks I know who turned away from tithing to keeping, I pray you will study this topic, hear the truth from God, and stop giving under compulsion or giving to get something.

I pray you will start to let God lead your giving. *Folks who write, and talk to me, testify to giving more to God when they practise keeping instead of tithing.* Only, they become more discerning, and move away from ministries

# The Truth About Tithing Today

that manipulate and appeal to their greed nature. They say also, they draw closer to Jesus.

God will show you how much to leave in His Kingdom; stay close to Him. Learning to leave funds in His Kingdom is an important part of growing closer to Him. If after reading this section you want to continue tithing, I suggest you answer these questions:

1. What's the basis for your decision?
2. Are you tithing 23.3%?
3. Which of the three tithes are you practising?
4. To whom do you tithe, and why?
5. Do you tithe money, or stuff?
6. How are you handling God's 90% that you keep?

For a simple Bible study on tithing and grace giving, read [Managing God's Money: 7-Branches Workbook, Chapter 2.](#)

May the grace, mercy, peace, and joy of Jesus our Messiah be with you in a powerful way as you allow Him to show you His truth. Amen!