

# Is Tithing Biblical?

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There is great debate in the church today about tithing. Some argue “tithing is under the law”, and no longer binding upon NT Christians while others referring to Malachi 3:10 would say “if you don’t tithe you are robbing God”. **Which is correct?**

## God doesn’t need our money - so why did He institute the tithe?

- Psa 50:12 NIV **If I were hungry I would not tell you**, for the world is mine, and all that is in it.

## Perhaps because of how powerfully money can affect us?

- 1 John 3:17 NIV If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, **how can the love of God be in him?**
- Mat 13:22 NIV The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and **the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful.**
- 1Ti 6:9-10 NIV Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. **Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith** and pierced themselves with many griefs.
- Mat 6:24 NIV "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. **You cannot serve both God and money.**

## Perhaps to establish some enduring principles?

- 1Co 9:7 Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat its grapes? Who tends a flock and does not drink the milk? **8 Do I say this merely on human authority? Doesn’t the Law say the same thing?** 9 For it is written in **the Law of Moses**: "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain." **Is it about oxen that God is concerned?** 10 **Surely he says this for us, doesn't he? Yes, this was written for us**, because whoever plows and threshes should be able to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest. 11 If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? 12 If others have this right of support from you, shouldn't we have it all the more? But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ.

*Is it possible that, in a similar manner, what was written about the tithe was written for us (not to bring us under the law) but to teach underlying truths, or enduring principles that God established by means of the tithe under the law...but would transcend the OT and still hold meaning in the NT?*

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## OT - the tithe was given to the Levites in return for the work they do

- Num 18:21 21 "I give to the Levites all the tithes in Israel as their inheritance in return for the work they do while serving at the tent of meeting.

## NT - ministers of the gospel should be supported in “the same way”

- 1Co 9:13-14 NIV Don't you know that **those who serve in the temple** get their food from the temple , and that **those who serve at the altar** share in what is offered on the altar? 14 **In the same way, the Lord has commanded** that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.

## OT - the tithe belongs to the LORD

- Lev 27:30-34 NIV "**A tithe of everything from the land**, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, **belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD.**

## In both OT and NT - EVERYTHING belongs to the LORD

- 1Co 10:26 NIV for, "The earth is the Lord's, and **everything in it.**" (quote of Psalm 24:1)
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## OT - tithe so the Levites could devote themselves to the Law of the LORD

- 2Ch 31:4-21 NIV He ordered the people living in Jerusalem to **give the portion due the priests and Levites so they could devote themselves to the Law of the LORD.**

## NT - a similar mandate for those whose task is to serve the word of God

- Act 6:3-4 ESV Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. 4 But **we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.**
  - 1Ti 5:17-18 NIV The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of **double honor**, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. 18 For Scripture says, "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain," and "The worker deserves his wages."
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## OT - the tithe was given so as to NOT neglect the house of God

- Neh 10:38-39 NIV A priest descended from Aaron is to accompany the Levites when they receive the tithes, and the Levites are to bring a tenth of the tithes up to the house of our God, to the storerooms of the treasury. 39 The people of Israel, including the Levites, are to bring their contributions of grain, new wine and olive oil to the storerooms, where the articles for the sanctuary and for the ministering priests, the gatekeepers and the musicians are also kept. "**We will not neglect the house of our God.**"

## NT - they put the money at the apostles' feet - don't neglect the house of God

- Acts 4:34-35 that **there were no needy persons** among them. For from time to time **those who owned land or houses sold them**, brought the money from the sales 35 and **put it at the apostles' feet**, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.
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## OT - God said those who did not tithe were robbing Him

- Mal 3:8 NIV "Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me. "But you ask, '**How are we robbing you?**' "**In tithes and offerings.**

## NT - Paul said he was robbing other churches because the Corinthians did not give sufficiently

- 2Co 11:7-8 NIV Was it a sin for me to lower myself in order to elevate you by preaching the gospel of God to you free of charge? 8 **I robbed other churches by receiving support from them so as to serve you.**
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## OT - a tithe was set aside every third year for the Levite, foreigner, fatherless and widow

- Deu 26:12 NIV When you have finished setting aside a tenth of all your produce in the third year, the year of the tithe, you shall give it to the Levite, the **foreigner**, the **fatherless** and the **widow**, so that they may eat in your towns and be satisfied.

## NT - we are to care for the stranger and the widow

- 1Pe 4:9 NIV Offer **hospitality** to one another without grumbling.
- Rom 12:13 NIV **Share** with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.
- 1Ti 5:3 NIV Give proper recognition to those **widows** who are really in need.

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## OT - a blessing to those who bring the tithe

- Mal 3:10 NIV 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.

## NT - give and it shall be given unto you

- Luk 6:38 NIV Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

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## New Testament Giving

2Co 8:1-5 NIV And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. 2 In the midst of a very severe **trial**, their overflowing **joy** and their **extreme poverty** welled up in **rich generosity**. 3 For I testify that they gave **as much as they were able**, and even **beyond their ability**. Entirely on their own, 4 they urgently pleaded with us for the **privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people**. 5 And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us.

- To give even **when in poverty**
- To give with **rich generosity**
- To give **as much as you are able**
- To give **beyond your ability**
- To count it a **privilege to serve** by giving

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2Co 9:6-11 NIV Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows **generously** will also reap generously. 7 Each of you should give **what you have decided** in your heart to give, **not reluctantly or under compulsion**, for God loves a **cheerful giver**. 8 And **God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work**. 9 As it is written: "They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor; their righteousness endures forever." 10 Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. 11 You will be enriched in every way **so that you can be generous on every occasion**, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

- Give **generously** not sparingly

- Give **willingly** not reluctantly or under compulsion
- Give **cheerfully** for God loves a cheerful giver
- Give **in faith** knowing that God will provide for all we need
- Give as a **lifestyle** - as God continues to enrich - to be generous on every occasion

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Act 4:32-37 NIV All the believers were one in heart and mind. **No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own**, but they **shared everything they had**. 33 With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And **God's grace was so powerfully at work in them** all 34 that **there were no needy persons** among them. For from time to time **those who owned land or houses sold them**, brought the money from the sales 35 and **put it at the apostles' feet**, and it was distributed to anyone who had need. 36 Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means "son of encouragement"), 37 sold a field he owned and brought the money and **put it at the apostles' feet**.

- Claim **no ownership**
- **Share everything** you have
- A goal that **no needy person** would be in the church
- **Sell possessions** to meet needs (land or houses)
- **Put the money at the apostles' feet**

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### Is tithing biblical?

1. **Yes** in the sense that it is valid to teach OT law with NT application just as Paul did in (1 Cor 9:9-10)
2. **Yes** in the sense that the many of the principles undergirding the command to tithe are enduring principles that express the heart of God even in the NT
3. **No** in the sense that NT Christians are not bound under a law in their giving
  - a) It is almost as if you can hear Jesus say, "In the law it was written to give a tithe of all, but I say unto you....."
4. **No** in the sense that tithing should be the goal or epitome of our giving
  - a) 10% giving can be a way for people to simply appease their conscience and never embrace the challenge of "**everything I have is the LORD's, how much should I keep?**"

### My challenge to us is - To free our hearts for generosity...and to urge us into NT patterns of giving

- 1) Do not put yourself under the law to tithe
- 2) If you do not currently tithe, set a goal to go there at a minimum - test the LORD in this
  - a) It is a great starting point to exercise your faith
  - b) To prioritize giving as a lifestyle
  - c) To trust God
  - d) A way to remove the negative hold money may have upon your heart
- 3) For those who tithe, don't carry it out like a religious duty - rather make it your goal to become cheerful, hilarious givers. May the extremely high standards of NT giving challenge you to move far beyond the tithe