
WHY TITHE?

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INTRODUCTION

One of the most consistent lessons we have to keep learning is that God's ways and thoughts are not like ours. Our natural tendencies incline us to act and to think in an almost opposite manner from how God approaches things. We must be reminded again and again about basic patterns for successful life in the Kingdom of God.

For instance, Jesus tells us, "*The last shall be first*" and "*Whoever wants to be significant should become the servant of all.*" In most cases, the actions or attitudes that would seem to place us at a disadvantage in the world are the very ones that give us the advantage in the Kingdom. Serving others, loving them unconditionally, showing mercy, being kind to enemies, turning the other cheek, etc. all improve our ultimate situation even though our natural mind tells us otherwise.

Beneath each of these seemingly impossible (crazy, ridiculous) admonitions is a power-principle of the Kingdom, a truth about how things really work (end up) in the cosmos. That is why our decision about whether or not to put our trust in the advice of the Bible really boils down to a question of faith—what we believe about what God wants for us:

“Do I believe that God wants to enrich my life with more benefit and bounty (internal and external) than I deserve, or than I can get by my own smarts/effort/sincerity?”

God freely gave His Son on our behalf to eliminate our total debt (ROMANS 8:32; COLOSSIANS 2:13-14); He has done for us what we could not do for ourselves. So, it is completely inconsistent with all He has already done, to imagine that He has switched tactics from giving to grabbing. Once that truth settles into our heart, virtually everything in the Bible comes alive in a different light than we have seen it before. The subject of tithing is more sensitive than some other spiritual-life topics for several reasons:

1. Inappropriate appeals for money have checkered the church's history. Besides, it's hard to see how giving money to a human agency is the same as giving it to God.
2. Money is a gigantic crossroads for almost every aspect of people's lives (fears and aspirations; success and failure; survival and protection; etc.).
3. Money is very spiritual, and its roots go deep into people's heart. Plus, it is very tangible, and it leaves no doubt about what it is spent on.

BLESSINGS AND CURSES

Before we can appreciate the concept of tithing, we must understand the spiritual concepts of blessings and curses. Blessings are far more than just poetic bits of well-wishing, and curses are much more than angry profanities. Both blessings and curses are spiritual forces that make things happen in the future.

A blessing is a benediction spoken by someone with greater authority/resource as an act of love to secure more benefit for people with less means (HEBREWS 7:7); blessings add bounty, more abundant resourcing, greater advantage or provision than people would experience on their own. Blessings have the power to shape the future; they bring increased prosperity—not because they give instructions to follow, but simply by the creative dynamic of the words themselves. Think of the sun as a blessing: when it shines on us, we get warmed (and tanned).

We can do things to get warm ourselves—wear thick socks and coats—but it is much easier and much more pleasant to bask in the sun. A blessing can create a tropical paradise for us to enjoy, even in the midst of a winter season; blessings

change the climate around us, and they altar what would otherwise be the scenario/outcome for our life.

Curses do the opposite. They freeze the air and block the sun. If we “*live under a curse*,” we have to work overtime and expend additional effort to get warm—and no matter how hard we work at overcoming the disadvantage we have been placed in by a curse, we find ourselves unable to get quite warm enough.

Blessings bring more bounty and delight into our lives than we would normally expect. Curses make everything harder. Blessings make things “*come together*” in the most extraordinary way; curses cause things to “*fall apart*” for no discernable reason.

A blessing is like a freshly cut Christmas tree in your living room—it is not part of the normal decoration (it’s seasonal), but it fits and adds another dimension of delight (the fragrance) to the whole house. A curse, on the other hand, is like a cat having peed on your carpet several times, or mold growing in your walls—the stench permeates everything, and no amount of deodorant spray or carpet cleaning can quite eliminate the smell. Look at MALACHI 3:8-11 in this light:

⁸“Will a man rob (cover over, defraud) God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, ‘How have we robbed Thee?’ In tithes (tenths) and offerings (presents, gifts).

⁹“You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation of you! ¹⁰“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test (investigate, examine, prove) Me now in this,” says the Lord of hosts, “if I will not open for you the windows of heaven, and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows (runs out of room).

¹¹“Then I will rebuke the devourer (consumer, eater) for you, so that it may not destroy (ruin, spoil, spill) the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field cast its grapes,” says the Lord of hosts.

SIMPLE QUESTIONS ABOUT TITHING

1. What (how much) is the tithe? Is tithing the same as giving/offering? (LEVITICUS 27:30)
2. What statement does the tithe make to the Lord?

3. Are there consequences that go along with tithing?
4. Is tithing exclusively part of the Old Testament Law? (GENESIS 14:17-20; HEBREWS 7:1-10)
5. Where is the tithe to be given? For what purposes is the tithe used? (NUMBERS 18:21; NEHEMIAH 10:34-39; 13:10-12)