

# The Messenger

## TITHING

By: Pastor Martin Feltz

The issue of tithing and giving can be a source of confusion and struggle for many Christians. This topic can be a complex and sensitive one within the Christian community. There can be different interpretations and practices regarding tithing among Christians. While the Bible encourages believers to give generously and joyfully, it's essential to find a balance that aligns with individual faith and understanding.

On one hand, some churches may over-emphasize the act of giving, placing heavy burdens on their congregants and creating an atmosphere where giving is seen as a measure of one's faith or worthiness. This can lead to feelings of guilt, pressure, and even financial strain for some individuals.

On the other hand, there are Christians who may resist or struggle with the biblical teachings on tithing, perhaps due to financial constraints, concerns about the use of funds within the church, or a lack of understanding about the purpose and principles behind giving.

Tithing and giving were originally intended as acts of joy and blessings, not sources of stress or division. The underlying principle is generosity and a willingness to support the work of God's kingdom, whether that be through financial contributions or other forms of giving, such as time, talent, or resources.

It's crucial for churches to teach about giving in a way that emphasizes the joy and blessing it brings rather than focusing solely on financial obligations. This can help individuals develop a genuine desire to give as an act of worship and gratitude. Additionally, transparency in how funds are used by the church can build trust and encourage generosity among members.

I guess the challenge lies in finding a balanced approach to tithing and giving that aligns with one's personal convictions, financial situation, and understanding of biblical teachings. When approached with a genuine desire to give and support the work of God's kingdom, tithing can indeed become a joy and a blessing for both the giver and the church community. (continued page 2)



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### SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- Welcome to our two newest Voting Members: Nexus and Graciella!
- The Last Sunday of every month is the Church Business meeting. Everyone is allowed to stay, but only Voting Members receive the privilege to vote.
- Ash Wednesday is Feb 14, 2024!
- Want to submit an article or idea? Email the church and we will put it into the news letter!



## TITHING

Ultimately, the act of giving should be a personal decision based on one's relationship with God and understanding of biblical principles. It's important for each individual to seek guidance, study the Scriptures, and pray for wisdom when it comes to their own giving practices.

Tithing is a concept that originated in the Old Testament of the Bible. In the Old Testament, tithing referred to the practice of giving a tenth (or 10%) of one's income or crops as an offering to God or for the support of religious institutions, such as the Levites who served in the temple. Tithing was seen as a way to demonstrate obedience to God and to support the religious community.

However, it's worth noting that the concept of tithing is still practiced by many religious individuals and communities today, both within and outside of the context of the Old Testament. While the specific practices and interpretations may vary, tithing can still be seen as a way to express gratitude, generosity, and financial support for religious or charitable purposes.

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### HOW MUCH DOES IT TAKE TO RUN A CHURCH?

Ever stop to think about this question? The answer is simple: a lot.

A church has to bring in money to pay its minister, pay the utilities, and to do public mission such as charity, Christian Education, and poverty reduction work. Remember that these missions require both time and talent. So, the Christian question is this: how can you help?

Different religious traditions may have their own teachings and practices when it comes to giving and supporting their respective communities, so the understanding and practice of tithing can differ between religions and denominations.

In the Old Testament, tithing was indeed a requirement under the Mosaic Law for the Israelites to give a portion of their crops, livestock, and other resources for various purposes. The tithes were used to support the Levites (the priestly tribe), the maintenance of the tabernacle/temple, the feasts and sacrifices, and the welfare of the poor.

The tithing system in the Old Testament was a means of providing for the needs of the religious establishment and supporting the community. It served as a form of taxation to sustain the religious and social structures of that time. The total percentage of tithes required, including all the different categories, would add up to around 23.3 percent.

It's worth noting that the system of tithing in the Old Testament was specific to the Israelites under the Mosaic Law, and its requirements may not directly apply to Christians or people of other faiths today. However, many individuals and religious communities still draw inspiration from the principle of giving a portion of their income or resources for charitable purposes, either in the form of tithes or voluntary offerings.

The New Testament does not specifically command Christians to follow a legalistic tithe system. Instead, it emphasizes the principles of generosity, cheerful giving, and stewardship of our resources. While tithing was a requirement in the Old Testament, the New Testament provides guidance on giving based on the teachings of Jesus and the early Christian community.

## TITHING, CONTINUED

In 2 Corinthians 9:6-7, the apostle Paul writes: "The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."

This passage encourages believers to give willingly and cheerfully, according to what they have decided in their hearts. It doesn't specify a specific percentage of income or resources, but rather focuses on the attitude and motivation behind giving.

Furthermore, 1 Corinthians 16:2 states: "On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come." Here, Paul instructs the Corinthian church to regularly set aside a portion of their income "as they may prosper," emphasizing proportional giving based on their abilities and fortunes.

Overall, the New Testament teaches that Christians should give willingly, generously, and in accordance with their means and convictions. The specific percentage or amount is not rigidly defined, leaving room for individual discernment and the leading of the Holy Spirit.

It's important to study the scriptures, seek guidance from trusted spiritual leaders, and prayerfully consider how to best steward our resources in a manner that aligns with biblical principles.

In the New Testament, we find teachings on the importance and benefits of giving. While no specific percentage is mandated like the Old Testament tithe, Christians are encouraged to give as they are able and with a cheerful heart. It's not about a legalistic obligation but rather a response of gratitude and love for God and a willingness to support the needs of the church community. Prayer and seeking God's wisdom can help guide individuals in determining the amount and manner of their giving. Ultimately, it's important to give with pure motives and a desire to worship God and serve others in the body of Christ.

Jesus emphasized the importance of generosity and selflessness. He taught his followers to give without expecting anything in return and to lay up treasures in heaven rather than on earth (Matthew 6:19-21). Jesus praised the widow who gave her small offering, emphasizing that the value of a gift is not measured by its amount but by the heart behind it (Mark 12:41-44).

The apostle Paul also addressed the topic of giving in his letters. In 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, Paul writes about the generosity of the Macedonian churches and encourages the Corinthian believers to excel in the grace of giving. He emphasizes that giving should be voluntary, done according to one's ability, and with a cheerful heart. Paul reminds them that God loves a cheerful giver and promises that those who sow generously will reap generously.

Furthermore, throughout the New Testament, we see numerous examples of early Christians voluntarily sharing their resources to support the needs of the community. Acts 2:44-45 describes how the early believers sold their possessions and distributed to each other according to need. This spirit of sharing and sacrificial giving was a demonstration of their unity and love for one another.

It's important to note that giving in the New Testament extends beyond financial contributions. Christians are also encouraged to give their time, talents, and resources in service to others. This includes acts of kindness, compassion, and hospitality.

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

At the end it's not about what you have or even what you've accomplished. It's about who you've lifted up, who you've made better. It's about what you've given back."

— **Denzel Washington**

"Open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land."

— **Deuteronomy 15:11**

## WHAT DOES THE CHURCH DO WITH ITS FUNDS?

The church uses collected money to pay it bills, but it also uses those funds to help people in need. Often times, the church gives gifts—as issued by the Board or the Congregation—to pay for heat,

food, clothing, and shelter. Of course, being a small church, we are limited in what we can provide, but that does not stop us from pulling our resources to help each other, and the world, when need arises! For example, the church Blessing Box is such a ministry!

## TITHING

Ultimately, the attitude with which we give is crucial. Giving should be done willingly, joyfully, and as an act of worship to God. It should spring from a heart that recognizes all we have as a gift from Him and seeks to bless and support others in need.

While there is no specific percentage required in the New Testament, Christians are encouraged to give generously, as they are able, with a cheerful heart, and in service to the body of Christ. Through giving, we demonstrate our love for God and

done with a sincere heart, recognizing that all we have comes from God and acknowledging Him as the ultimate provider.

Throughout the Bible, there is a consistent call to care for the poor, the widow, the orphan, and the stranger. For example, James 1:27 emphasizes the importance of looking after orphans and widows in their distress. Giving should extend beyond our immediate circle to reach those who are marginalized, oppressed, and in need.

*“It's important to note that the principles of giving in Christianity are not limited to monetary contributions...”*

our care for others, and we participate in the work of building His kingdom here on earth.

In 2 Corinthians 9:7, it is mentioned that God loves a cheerful giver. This suggests that giving should not be done out of obligation or compulsion but with a willing and joyful attitude. It is an opportunity to express gratitude to God for His blessings and to share those blessings with others.

Jesus commended the widow who gave her two small coins because she gave out of her poverty, while others gave out of their abundance (Mark 12:41-44). This highlights the value of sacrificial giving, where we are willing to give up something significant to meet the needs of others.

In Romans 12:1, Paul urges believers to present their bodies as living sacrifices, which he describes as their spiritual worship. Giving can also be seen as a form of worship when it is

Jesus taught his followers to give in secret, without seeking public recognition or praise (Matthew 6:2-4). This emphasizes the importance of humility in giving and focuses on the intention behind the act rather than receiving accolades from others.

It's important to note that the principles of giving in Christianity are not limited to monetary contributions. While financial giving is often emphasized, Christians are also called to give of their time, talents, and resources to serve others and share the love of Christ.

In summary, giving in the context of Christian teachings goes beyond mere financial contributions. It involves a generous and sacrificial attitude, done with a cheerful heart, as an act of worship to God, and directed towards meeting the needs of others, particularly the marginalized and vulnerable.

## THE ICCC



*International Council of Community Churches*

In October of 2023, Grace Christian Church started a new and uncharted journey. Having been an Independent Christian Church, the Church became affiliated with an organization, the ICCC.

### **What is the ICCC?**

The International Council of Community Churches is not a denomination. It is a Communion, or a collection of churches which want to support Christian mission

throughout the world. As members of the ICCC, Grace Christian Church has joined hundreds of other churches in supporting the missions and cause of Christ throughout the world such as disaster relief, education, and a fight for religious freedom.

### **What does this mean for Grace Christian?**

Well, we are glad you asked! Currently, Grace Christian as an observer member of the ICCC. This means that we do not have full participation yet, but that will change when we receive our 501(c)(3) filing as the ICCC will move us into full membership. This will grant us access to the ICCC's membership rate for Church Insurance (hopefully lowering out own), provide a network to find clergy when it is time for Pastor Feltz to retire, and it provides scholarships to those folks in school affiliated with Grace Christian Church!

### **Is that all?**

Actually, no! The ICCC also gives use resources to pull from that will help us establish our food pantry, revitalize the church, and move forward in our mission! Want to find out more about the ICCC? Look them up on Facebook, or go to their website: [www.icccnow.org](http://www.icccnow.org)



## GRACE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Want to learn more about GCC? Scan the QR Code below to be sent to our website to learn about our vision, mission, and calling!



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## WHAT IS LENT, ASH WEDNESDAY?

By: Daniel Coffey

Since ancient times, humans have marked their repentance from sinfulness and their return to God through unique festivals and holidays. In the Christian tradition, part of the preparation time before Easter is the season of Lent, represented by the color purple in the church calendar. The word “Lent” is not about that stuff you clean out of the dryer; instead, it is a surprisingly secular word that came into Christian usage in the 1200’s. Lent is derived from the Old English word “Lencten”, which is the ancestral parent word of our modern English word “lengthen,” and references the lengthening of the daylight hours going into spring. Ash Wednesday is the start of Lent. It helps us prepare for the long road leading to the crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Jesus, making the season of Lent a “spiritual spring” where the flowers of our hearts are prepared to bloom into the glorious resurrection of Easter Sunday. The end of Lent happened on Holy Saturday during the Great Vigil of Easter, one of three midnight church services that celebrate the light of Christ.

Ash Wednesday has been celebrated as a day of fasting and repentance in the Christian Church since the First Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D., but at its core

is the more ancient acknowledgment that we are finite creatures who often lose our way in life. In Christian language, we call this “losing of the way” sin; and, as our Jewish siblings of old, we use ashes or dust to show that we are in a state of mourning for the wrongs we have done to God and each other. This is done in one of two ways: in the Eastern Christian traditions, the dust or ash is sprinkled on the penitent’s head with the declaration “Repent, and believe the Gospel”; or, as is most common in the Western Christian traditions, the ash is affixed to the fore-

head in the sign of the cross followed by the dictum, “Remember you are dust, and dust you shall return”. To up the ante, many Christians will bind themselves with a Lenten Oath to give up or refrain from something during the forty days of Lent. I have preferred to restrain myself with an oath that adds something to my already busy schedule, such as an additional hour of Bible study a day or an extra hour of volunteering. Many people find keeping their Lenten Oaths difficult and soon fizzle out, but I will tell you the secret to keeping your pledge going all of Lent: cheat days. That is correct; you read it right—church-sanctioned cheat days. If you count the calendar days between Ash Wednesday and Holy Saturday, you will notice that there are forty-six days. This is because Sundays are considered feast days outside the forty days of Lentenide. This is helpful as it allows you a little leeway to fulfill your oath faithfully, so don’t worry if you have sworn to refrain from chocolate consumption during Lent as you are allowed to have that sinfully delicious chocolate pie after dinner on Sunday.

