

CrossTalk

A publication of Kletos a ministry of Abundant Life Restoration Ministries

Sow Like A Farmer!

Planting Season in Maryland begins on March 15th. While listening to Christian television this morning, I heard an evangelist speak of sowing and reaping. In that discourse, with his television audience, Richard Roberts encouraged his viewership to think like a farmer. This caused my spirit to leap, as I wondered, how many givers have a harvest in mind when they sow?

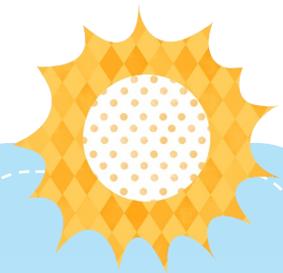
Let's pause for a moment and consider that question. When a farmer plants his seeds, he does so expecting a harvest.

When you give, do you consider the harvest you release with the seed? Release? Absolutely! No harvest can show up unless a seed is sown! The harvest is hidden in the seed and is only released when the seed is sown! Glory! As you give, consider the harvest you release!

Now, most Christians have heard Galatians 6:7 and have received it only as an admonition against sensual or fleshly behavior. And of course the **Principle** can be applied in such a way. But, let's look at the **Context** in which Galatians 6:7 –8 was written. The context suggests a conversation about giving....**continue on page 2**

Suggested Readings

- Money Possessions and Eternity by Randy Alcorn
- Giving & Tithing: Includes Serving and Stewardship by Larry Burkett

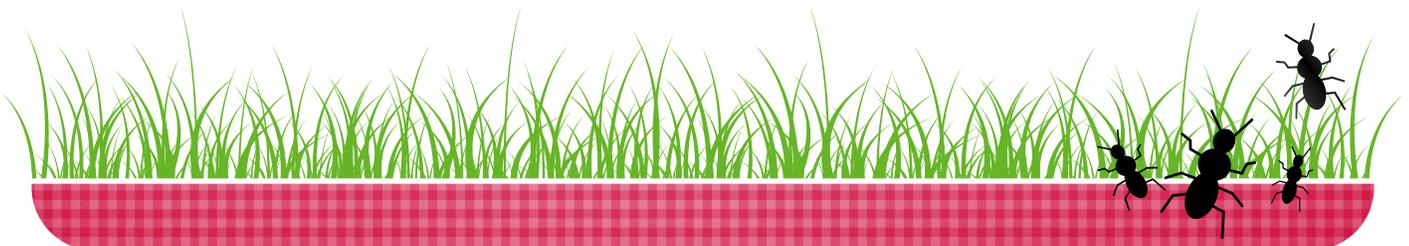


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Prayer Points

Lord make Abundant Life a Fruitful House so that all who sow into this house will reap abundantly. I thank you for increase and overflow. Break the cycle of lack as we release our seed by faith. Lord enlarge us so we leave an inheritance to our children (Prov 13:22) and cause us to be faithful with our wealth and not unfaithful (Luke 16:11). Bless us and enlarge us in Jesus Name I pray Amen.



In The Next Edition

6. We Tithe because it releases the blessing of God

7. We tithe because of grace, but we are not legalistic

8. We tithe because it all belongs to God in the first place

9. We tithe because its remained the established doctrine and practice of great leaders and churches throughout history

10. We tithe because one day we will give an account

Money Matters

This edition of CrossTalk is dedicated to establishing our position on Tithing and answer a few questions about the subject. We have listed 5 of the 10 Reasons We Tithe. This information has been taken directly from a resource we found online at The Father's House. Since it mirrors our statements of belief we chose not to reinvent the wheel and opted instead to share excerpts with you. We will include the last 5 Reasons in the next edition.

To access the full article visit: <http://www.tfh.org/tithe>

Sow Like a Farmer! ...Cont.

As stewards or caretakers of Gods resources, we must pause and consider what harvest we release through our giving. "For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Galatians 6:8)

The word "corruption" indicates -things that are perishable. The word "everlasting" speaks to that which -never ceases.

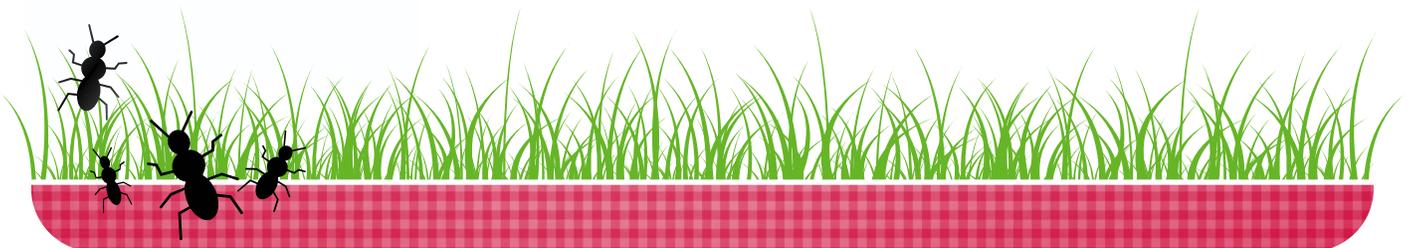
When we give to the kingdom, we release perpetual increase!

Think of making deposits into your bank account. When you want to borrow or take from it you only have access to what you put in and perhaps some interest. This is the level that most people live in. Just barely making it , God's grace allowing us to get a bonus or overtime or opportunity here and there.

Now think of the concept behind credit unions. The idea is that members have access to pooled resources. So, now your borrowing ability is beyond you. Kingdom living and Kingdom giving works under this principle. As members, God sees you pouring in to your local house which opens you up to resources throughout the whole kingdom! Hence, the everlasting (never ceasing, always there).

I'm ready for perpetual increase! Let's walk in it together!

Shalom



Money Matters....

Starting Point

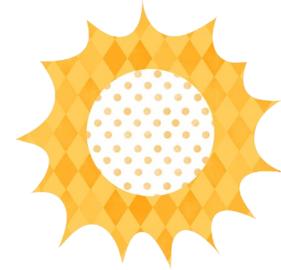
The foundation and essence of the Christian life is to follow Jesus with all that we are and hold nothing back. To be a disciple means that my financial life will be inseparably connected to my worship. To be a lover of God is to be a giver; to be filled with the Spirit is to be filled with the very essence of our generous God.

When we give God our lives it also includes

our treasure (our time, talent and money). According to Jesus, the places and people we give our treasure to are the keepers of our heart and the objects of our affection.

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Matthew 6:21 (NIV)



"To be a disciple means that my financial life will be inseparably connected to my worship"- Dave Patterson

Tithing?

Tithing is the practical and consistent way that we put God first in our lives and develop healthy spiritual habits. If I say, "Jesus You are my Lord and God; You are first in my life," and then put Him last in my budget, that's a contradiction that cannot be justified in light of scripture.

Tithing is the tangible way that we put God first in our lives and clearly establish our priorities and who we are serving

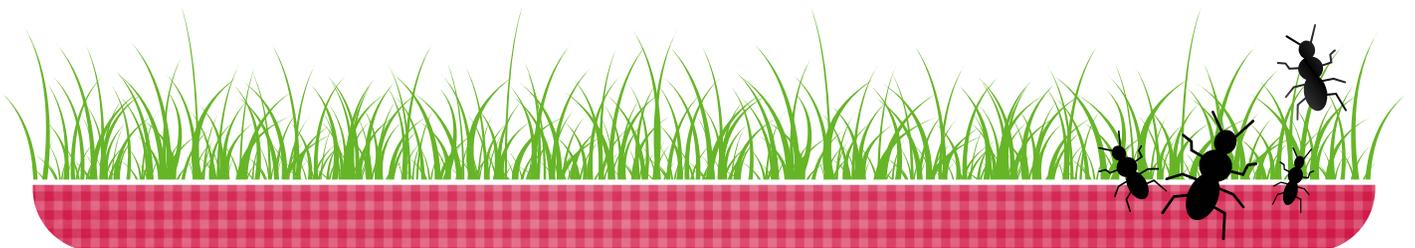
Bring this tithe to eat before the Lord your God at the place he shall choose as his sanctuary; this applies to your tithes of grain, new wine, olive oil, and the firstborn of your flocks and herds." Deuteronomy 14:23 (LB)

The purpose of tithing is to teach you always to put God first in your lives

Tithing is the spiritual practice of giving back to God the first 10% of all that we earn. The word "tithe" comes from the number "ten" in Hebrew, and means a tenth. So simply put, for every \$10 I earn or receive, the first dollar belongs to the Lord. Here is the most famous verse used to teach and support the principle of tithing, and can be heard in most churches on a regular basis.

Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so there will be enough food in my Temple. If you do," says the LORD of Heaven's Armies, "I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won't have enough room to take it in! Try it! Put me to the test!

Malachi 3:10 (NLT)



Is Tithing for Today?

Here are some of the big and ongoing questions and arguments by those who oppose the concept and practice of tithing: "Should Christians tithe?" "Tithing is an Old Testament practice limited to those who are under the law." "New Testament giving is under grace, and all by grace, so there are no set requirements." And one of the stronger accusations, "Tithing is the way pastors and churches manipulate people into giving their money."

In the next couple pages I will lay out 10 reasons we believe in and practice tithing as a church.

We will also address some of the questions and concerns in the process

1. **We tithe because the first and the best belong to the Lord.**

This is a clear principle and practice throughout scripture. For those who argue that tithing, which is bringing the first and best tenth, only belongs within the Mosaic Law, I would offer these considerations.

a. Abraham brought the tithe some 430 years before the law was written and set a precedent for all those who are "Abraham's seed" (*Galatians 3:26-29*). **So tithing precedes the law.**

Melchizedek blessed Abram with this blessing:

"Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. And blessed be God Most High, who has defeated your enemies for you." **Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.**

Genesis 14:19-20

b. Jacob made a covenant to tithe hundreds of years before the law was given to Moses, with no mandate from God. His act of worship was simply inspired by the Holy Spirit, and continued to establish a pattern and precedent of tithing.

Genesis 28:22 (NLT)

Just a detail; those who oppose the practice of tithing will argue that Old Testament tithing was only required from the agricultural increase of the crops, thus, giving money, or asking all believers to tithe their money, is an unbiblical standard. As you can clearly see from the previous two examples, both Abraham and Jacob were bringing money and "everything" that God had blessed them with.

2. **We tithe because wisdom cries out that we should.**

The book of Proverbs is the book of wisdom. It is not law and it clearly applies to every believer for all generations. The clearest verse in the Bible regarding this practice of bringing the first and best can be found in this book of timeless wisdom.

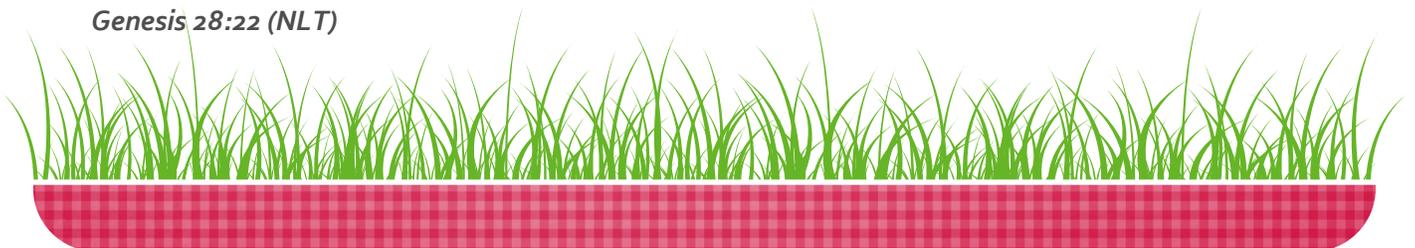
***"Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine"* Proverbs 3:9-10**

A couple observations from these verses:

"Honoring God with your wealth" was easily and commonly understood as tithing. There was no guess work as to what or how much was being required as the first and best.

The bringing of the tithe or "first and best" is inseparable from the promise of God's blessing on those who do. As it says in *Malachi 3:10*, **"He will open the windows of heaven"**.

If these were the only verses in the Bible about honoring God with our wealth, it would still be enough to trust God as a giver!



3. We tithe because New Testament believers gave a percentage of their income consistently and generously.

1 Corinthians is a letter that was circulated to the churches that Paul had planted. Paul used the giving of the Macedonian churches as a model of giving that would become a template for all the others. The early church was encouraged to practice this pattern of bringing a percentage of their income on the first day of the week. This practice has been followed for thousands of years now

On the first day of every week each of you should put aside something from what you have earned during the week, and use it for this offering. The amount depends on how much the Lord has helped you earn.-1 Corinthians 16:2

I want to mention that this verse is not requiring a tithe but confirming the principles we're discussing: first and best, consistent practice, and "in keeping or proportional to your income". Remember that tithing is not a New Testament law but a Biblical principle and pattern for giving.

4. We tithe because Jesus never negated or abolished the practice of tithing.

Scholars present a very strong argument that Jesus grew up in a tithing home, and that the New Testament church was launched with Jewish people, who so had the practice of tithing down that there was no real need to present it as some new expectation or requirement. Thus, when Jesus confronted the Pharisees about the issue of tithing He basically said, "Yes, you should tithe, now get busy loving people!"

"What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are careful to tithe even the tiniest income from your herb gardens, but you ignore the more important aspects of the law—justice, mercy, and faith. You should tithe, yes, but do not neglect the more important things.-Matthew 23:23 (NLT)

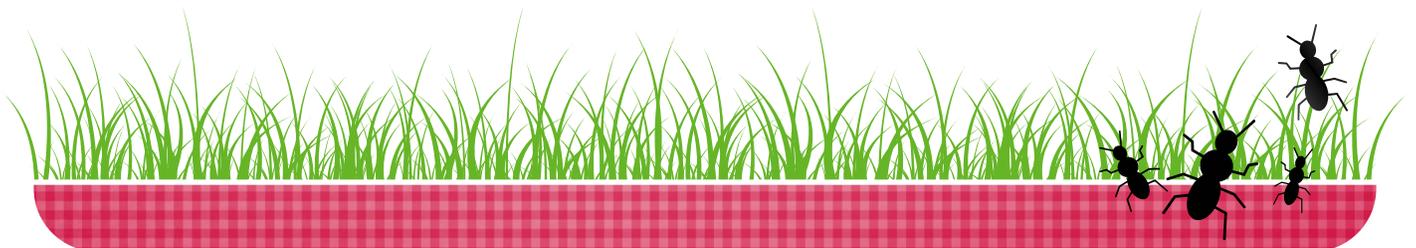
We see consistent evidence of the patterns of giving in the letters to the Church and the book of Acts, without detailed instruction on how or how much. Why? Because it was already an established part of their faith and worship gatherings.

Tithing is unlike many other Old Testament practices, where Jesus and the Apostles either fulfilled or clearly negated their ongoing practice, like legalistic Sabbath observance, blood sacrifices, mandatory feast and festivals, circumcision, and the list goes on. Jesus never abolished or rescinded the practice of tithing.

5. We tithe because it is a starting point for New Testament giving.

The tithe is not a law to be bound by, but a standard to use as a starting point for those who have been saved by grace! We are in no way implying or preaching that tithing is New Testament law, and if you break that law you will stand in judgment for it! Tithing as a starting point, not a goal to achieve

If we understand that grace always exceeds the law, and that the New Testament believers gave far above 10% of their own volition, we can begin to get an accurate perspective of New Testament tithing. Tithing is intended to train people to trust God, to break greed and selfishness off our lives, and build healthy spiritual habits that will release God's blessing over our lives. A productive, blessed life requires standards that we will hold ourselves to. This is not legalism or law, it's just common sense and much-needed spiritual disciplines.



A Few Common Questions about Tithing:

Q: What if I don't have the faith or desire to give a full 10% of my income? Am I in sin?

A: This is a heart issue, and ultimately between you and the Lord. I can understand someone who is struggling to pay bills, or brand new in their walk with the Lord, taking a while to wrap their mind and heart around the biblical standards of giving. I think God looks at each person's journey, maturity, obedience, and heart motivations. So with that said, only the Lord could say who is sinning and who is simply growing in their giving.

Q: I've heard it said that if I don't tithe, I'm robbing God and under a curse. Does God actually curse non-tithers?

A: Technically, no, God does not curse New Testament believers. Yet, in principle, it does happen but it's a matter of semantics. Let me explain. The curse in the New Testament could be explained and experienced as a lack or absence of blessing. The net results may appear the same. 1 Corinthians tells us that if we "sow sparingly we will reap sparingly". Proverbs tells us that "the world of the stingy gets smaller and smaller". So whether we call it a curse or absence of blessing, the results are not good.

Q: Where do I send my tithe? Does it all go to my local church or can I divide it up as I please (i.e. charitable organizations, my son's Christian school tuition, my brother-in-law's missions trip)?

A: The Bible tells us to "bring all the tithe into the storehouse". This means the local church or place where you are being spiritually fed. If you do not have a local church, then I guess you could give to the various ministries you're receiving teaching and encouragement from, but I would strongly recommend everyone get planted in a healthy local church, bring the tithe to that storehouse, and give beyond that amount in offerings as the Lord leads you.

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