

IS TITHING BIBLICAL? (Parts 1 & 2)

Pastor Scott Maurer – April 3 & 10

Selected Scriptures

Memory verse: Matthew 6:19-21

SUGGESTED FORMULA TO CONSIDER: “A tithe is 10% or more of a family’s *gross* income given to their *local* church’s *main* account. All other giving (e.g. church building fund, church emergency fund, special church offerings, outside charities or missions) is *beyond* the tithe.”

PART 1 (notes for April 3)

Some *benefits* of a “formula” (it’s better to think of a formula as a “welcome guide” *rather* than a “legalistic prescription”):

- We rarely have a metric to measure how we’re doing in our faith walk
- It can be a way to continue to measure the *stretching* of our faith

Some *risks* of a formula – (a formula cannot measure what our heart is doing)

- We are to give joyfully not under compulsion, and a formula can’t measure that (but it can discipline us to regularly exercise our hearts and monitor the reaction)
- We can be subject to self-righteousness (e.g. “I have ‘accomplished’ the formula, why haven’t you?”)
- We can become complacent with a sense of “having arrived” and stop stretching ourselves

What are “*tithes*” and “*offerings*”?

- Tithe = Hebrew term meaning “one-tenth” or 10%
- In the Old Testament, the “tithe” was only one of several instances of giving. Total giving came to more than merely 10% (Deuteronomy 12:4-7 – *NIV 184*)
- Many of these were given as people felt led (e.g. special vows, special offerings, Moses’ offering for the tabernacle), BUT some (such as first fruits and tithe) were just ASSUMED to belong to God (Leviticus 27:9-13, 26, 30-32 – *NIV 125*; Acts 5)

Is the *tithe* (or 10%) still valid today?

- We are no longer under the Old Testament law – Jesus is its fulfillment (e.g. Romans 8:1-2)
- *But* – In fulfilling/abrogating the law, Jesus never “lowered the bar” – He always “raised the bar” (Matthew 5:17-20, 21-26, 27-30 – *NIV 936/959*)
- The tithe was not even considered one of the “weightier” matters of the law – it was more of a “no brainer” or a “given” (Matthew 23:23 – *NIV 959/981*)
- Giving *beyond* the minimum tithe is the pattern of the early church (Acts 2:44-45; Didache)
- The minimum 10% giving principle was the norm *before* the specific giving requirements given to Moses in the Law (Genesis 4:3-7, 14:20, 28:22; Amos 4:4)

PART 2 (Notes for April 10)

Is that 10% of *Gross Income* or *Net Income*?

- Consider the principle of first fruits where we bring the *first* of our blessings and the *best* of our blessings (Exodus 34:19, 26 – NIV 88/89; Numbers 18:30-32 – NIV 149)
- God does not want our “leftovers”

WHERE SHOULD THAT 10% PLUS GO?

We can take some guidance from the OT principle that the money went to the Temple

- This paid for temple maintenance/construction, worship events, staff, benevolence
- If we all give a minimum of 10%, it distributes responsibility more fairly among us

Where we bring our tithe reflects our thinking about our local church

(Matthew 6:21 – NIV 938/960)

- **What is a local church?** Is it a place to serve us? (in which case we will pay a fee proportionate to the “service” we receive) **OR** is it a place to serve God? (Matthew 20:28; John 13:1-17)
- **What is the local church’s role in the Kingdom of God?** Is the church just *one* of many different Christian charities/organizations out there **OR** is it the primary repository of the Gospel (1 Timothy 3:15), the bride of Christ and the Body of Christ (Ephesians 5:25-33), the primary means to encourage the saints to continue to mature in faith until their earthly death (Colossians 1:24-29; Ephesians 4:12-13)?
- **What is our vision for Bethel in the future?** Is our vision for Bethel’s role in the Kingdom fairly small and complacent **OR** are we *truly* expecting God to do great things among us (Acts 2)?

If we do not bring our first 10% to the church’s *general* fund, we run the risk of playing games with our “offerings” by earmarking them for accounts that we “believe in”

- If we don’t like the way some money is being spent, we are tempted to throw all our money in a different account – but this behavior is not appropriate for a community of believers (Acts 2:44; John 13:34; Romans 12; Hebrews 13:17)
- Giving 10% or more to the *general* account (which is used for the majority of ministry) is a great discipline – then beyond that, we give to wherever our heart leads us – this discipline will keep us very honest