



## ME TITHE?

Why not? There's plenty of precedent.

The biblical call to tithe is clearly sounded in both the Old Testament and the Gospels. Although tithing has its roots in Jewish tradition, it's also an integral part of being Christian. Tithing is both a Christian responsibility and a privilege. It is a responsibility because God has blessed us bountifully, and we are called to respond in thanksgiving by returning at least a tenth of those blessings. Tithing is also a privilege because we are a people called by Jesus Christ to a special mission.

You might think that the thankful giving of ten percent of your time, talent and treasure to God is impossible. But once you have accepted the fact that this is something you are called to do, the path toward tithing can become easier. The first step, however, calls for some rethinking.

For starters, you have to change some ideas you might have about giving. The first to go is, "I'll give my fair share." This has no relationship to the practice of Christian stewardship, and is often little more than an exercise of the rule of the minimum. This is the kind of thinking that inspires questions such as "What is the least I can give and still be a member in good standing?"

Pledging to help balance the church budget is another idea that needs to fall by the wayside. According to this way of thinking, you calculate the least amount of money needed to keep the church building open, run a few programs, and pay the clergy. This can hardly be considered an adequate and faithful response to God's love. A good steward does not ask, "How little can I do?" but, "How much have I been blessed?"

As you continue to think about tithing, it is important to remember that God's work is carried out by many secular and voluntary groups responding to human need around the world. Schools, hospitals, and other charitable organizations also need your time, talent and treasure, for they, too, are doing God's work. If a portion of your tithe goes in this direction, your giving will symbolically form a cross, being both vertical and horizontal.

You - the individual giver - must prayerfully decide in what direction your tithe will go and how it will be divided. This is a matter for you and your Maker. You must also determine whether your tithe will be based on gross or net income; how you will continue to meet family and work responsibilities in giving your time; and what portion of your abilities you can share and still fulfill your other obligations.

It might be helpful to think in terms of percentages. Ask yourself, "What percentage of my time; talent and treasure can I joyfully and thankfully give to God this year?" It might be two, three or five percent. Figure on a percentage, then try it. The next year, try to increase this percentage. Before long, you will be tithing. It may take three, four or more years, but ultimately you will reach the tithe - the Christian standard. And with God's help, you can move beyond it to truly generous giving. This is how other tithers have accomplished it.

Surprisingly, you will neither go broke nor will you become exhausted. You *will* learn how to budget your time, talent and treasure to respond in thanks for 100 percent of the gifts God has given you. You will become a skillful manager of resources - a good and faithful steward.

"Me, tithe?"  
Yes, of course you can.