

The joys of TITHING.

The dictionary defines tithing as: Voluntarily giving a tenth part of one's income to a charity or for the support of clergy, or the church. In some cases tithing is also understood as a tax, or levy, but the most common interpretation is the voluntary practice.

The concept of tithing comes to us from the historical account in Genesis, where Abraham tithes to Melchizedek, after he has won a battle.

Going back even earlier, before Abraham, tithing was practiced as a tax in Babylon.

Moses introduces tithing to the Jewish people in Numbers and Deuteronomy, to support the Levites whose sole duty was the functioning of the Tabernacle.

The prophet Malachi makes it quit plain that for a believer **not to tithe**, is the same as robbing God. The implication is that by tithing, the believer acknowledges that earthly goods possessed by the believer really belong to God. God does not want us to tithe so He can have our money, He is without any needs. But He wants us to honor Him in this area of our life. "Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me. Even this whole nation." (Malachi 3 vs 9).

Then Malachi turns a negative into a positive: "Bring all the tithes into my storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and **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 such a blessing, that there will not be room enough to receive it." (Malachi 3 vs 10). (The word 'prove' can also be translated as 'test'). It is the only time in the Bible that God recommends we 'test' Him.

The Jewish people were commanded by Moses to tithe **more than** ten percent. Every third year they were told (Deuteronomy 14 vs 28), to provide an additional ten percent, during that year.

For a Christian it is one of the six cornerstone principles of belief. The other five are: Praying, Bible reading, Baptism, Worshiping God and Witnessing to others.

On the subject of tithing Jesus told the religious leaders of His day: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, WITHOUT LEAVING THE OTHERS UNDONE.” (Matthew 23:23 and Luke 11:42)

At first glance tithing appears to be a yoke, just another burden. Those who practice tithing however, soon discover that Malachi was right! When you give to God, He blesses what is left! You soon discover that you cannot out-give God. The motive for our tithing is important. We cannot ‘give to get’. The Lord knows our heart, and He understands our motive. The apostle Paul told us that God ‘loves a cheerful giver.’ We must tithe to show God that we believe it when He says: “All the gold, and all the silver, and the cattle on a thousand hills are Mine.”

It has been said that if all of us who believe in God: Jews, Catholics and Protestants, would tithe, we could eliminate poverty worldwide, virtually overnight!

While most believers are discreet about tithing and the subsequent blessings bestowed upon them from God, we do know of several well-known American businessmen who were richly blessed for their obedience. Among them are William Colgate, (Colgate-Palmolive), James L. Kraft (Kraft foods), and Henry John Heinz (Ketchup). All three of these men started out tithing 10%, and so blessed were they by the practice, that at the time of their death, they were giving away 100% of their income!

The practice of tithing should begin with prayer concerning the tithe. We need to pray that the money we tithe is used in a way that is ‘God honoring.’ Then we need to pray for wisdom to tithe wisely. Next we need to pray for opportunities, and the ability to increase our tithing, beyond the ten percent. A wonderful tithing blessing comes when you can put some money into a plain envelope and give it to a family in your church, or a single mother, who are clearly in need. This is a picture of God using you to do His wishes, through tithing. If people later try to pay you back, you must tell them to ‘pass it on’, instead of returning it.

Another novel way of tithing is to support a young pastor, who is just getting started. If the Lord puts it on your heart, you can be sure that the recipient has a need. In fact there are two people in life that you can never ‘overpay.’ One is your (Bible-believing) Pastor, the other is a policeman.

There are other ways of tithing. If your church is organizing an event, and there is a need for the purchase of an item or items that will make the event run more smoothly, and the church either does not have the funds, or it requires a board meeting to approve the expense, you can obtain the item and make it available. The more discreetly you do it, the more God will bless you. If you see a 'close-out' sale on an item that your church uses on a regular basis, be it cans of coffee, paper cups, toilet paper or liquid soap, or a number of similar items, buy some and put them in a church cupboard, and don't let anyone know. Why not consider including your church or evangelistic ministry in your will?

Finally here is a challenge for those of you who have a certain amount of control over your income, such as self-employed people and people who are involved in selling. Keep track of your tithe for the current month, then set a goal to add 1% to that amount next month, month 'X' = 100%, month 'Y' = 101%. If you were able to do it, add 1% the following month. Do not back-track, hold the line if you must, but keep adding the 1% whenever you have met your goal.

In tithing, never worry about obtaining tax receipts. Take them when they are available, but do not refrain from tithing just because you will not obtain a receipt. Let God look after your need. To quote the apostle Paul: "And my God shall supply all your needs, according to His riches in glory."

* This website was introduced to the public on August 1 2007, and a minimum of 10% of the revenue derived from the business that results from this site has gone and will continue to go, to Christ-centered causes. Among these are: Voice of the Martyrs, Coral Ridge Ministries, Salvation Army.

Your comments are welcome. Peter Degraaf <:::><