

## IS TITHING FOR ME?

### What is tithing?

A tithe or a “tenth” was a portion of property devoted to religious uses. The number ten signifies or stood for totality and complete right or ownership as with the Ten Commandments. Thus a tenth expressed and acknowledged God’s ownership of everything on earth. “The earth is the Lord’s and all it contains, the world and those who dwell in it” (Psalm 24.1).

Prior to the Law Abram gave a tithe from the spoils of his victory (Genesis 14.20) to Melchizedek, the Priest and King of Salem. In Genesis 28.18-22, Jacob conveys that his tithe was an act of gratitude and recognition that God was the source of his well-being and not himself.

In the Law, the tithe was assigned to the Levites for performing their priestly duties (Leviticus 27.30-33; Numbers 18.21) and was considered a necessity if Israel was to enjoy God’s blessing and prosperity. Malachi 3.10 states that we should bring the “whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My [God’s] house, and test Me now in this, says the Lord of Host, if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until there is no need.” To withhold one’s tithe was so powerful an insult that God pronounced it an act of stealing from Him (Mal 3.8).

### What about today?

Today we still recognize and attribute worth to God (as the word “worship” conveys being derived from the old English word “worthship”). Every time we bring our tithes before Him we confess along with James that “every good and perfect gift is from above” (James 1.17). We also follow the teachings of Christ in which He gave as an example the priest who received a tithe for performing their sacred service and “so also” Paul writes, the Lord directed those who proclaim the Gospel to likewise get their “living from the gospel” (1 Corinthians 9.13,14). The phrase “so also” in verse 14 refers to “in the same way” or “in like manner.” For this reason Abram’s act of tithing before the law becomes an enduring example and sign in the book of Hebrews as does his act of faith in Romans 4.

### Is Tithing enough?

Tithing has never been God’s goal for His people but rather their starting point. Scripture speaks not simply of tithes but of offerings. From the beginning of time His favor has been upon those who bring their first fruits with a willing heart. Note: In Genesis 4.3, Cain brought an offering (not firstfruits) “...in the course of time” or “at the end of days” conveying his lethargy and apathy. Malachi 1.13 states that the Israelites were saying “how tiresome it is!” as they brought their lame and their sick before God. But Abel “brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions” (Genesis 4.4). In other words, Abel came willingly with great alacrity offering up the finest and the best. No wonder “God had regard for Abel and for his offering” (Genesis 4.4).

### What does God really want?

In the Old Testament we read often of the “free will offering” by which God gave His people the opportunity of not only acknowledging His ownership but acknowledging His abundant grace toward them. Proverbs 3.9 says “Honor the Lord from your wealth, and from the first of all your produce.” Paul even speaks of an abounding grace that creates a cheerful liberality so powerful that it would cause even those in deep poverty to “beg for the favor of participating in the support of the saints...” (2 Corinthians 8 & 9). Giving a tenth is giving that which belongs to God. Giving that which goes above and beyond displays a heart that longs for God. David, “a man after God’s own heart” declares “I will not offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God which cost me nothing” (2 Samuel 24.24). The apostle Paul remind us of “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8.9). God’s grace upon and in us whether in the Old or New Testament has always been the goal of our faith and His desire for us.

Remember, the evil heart wants to withhold and steal... the good heart wants to release and give. “The wicked borrows and does not pay back, but the righteous is gracious & gives” (Psalm 37.21).