

Tithing: Using Money God's Way

Every faculty you have, your power of thinking or of moving your limbs from moment to moment, is given you by God. If you devoted every moment of your whole life exclusively to His service, you could not give Him anything that was not in a sense His own already.

– C. S. Lewis, Mere Christianity

What goes through your mind when you get extra money?? What about when you receive that paycheck?? If you're like most, you think, *"This is MY money! What do I want to do with it?"*

As we are pressing into making Jesus the LORD over every area of our lives, we have to recognize this includes our finances as well! Trusting God for finances is one of the BIGGEST lessons of faith we can learn in order to lay a STRONG foundation for our future! Some of the most stressful things in life, things that break up homes, destroy marriages, and ruin people has to do with money! So, knowing God's heart for money, and developing a determination to trust what He put together, is the BEST option for us!

Questions: *Are there things that make it hard for you to trust God when it comes to money? Share if you can. Are you willing to surrender these things to God and invite Him to show you His heart for you, and your money? If yes, stop and do this before continuing!*

We are Called Stewards:

We live in 2 kingdoms at the same time: the kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world. And these 2 kingdoms have opposite priorities.

The economy of God's Kingdom, which you belong to if Jesus is your Lord, is based on giving and receiving. The motivating force behind your decision is others-centered. It's about generosity. Success is determined by how much of your resources you have invested in things that matter to God.

The economy of this world is based on buying and selling. Self-oriented spending or investing is the motivating force here. Success is determined by the accumulation of particular types of possessions, sadly, in many cases, for the purpose of impressing others.

As one who belongs to God's Kingdom, you must operate within this world's economic system of buying and selling and still withstand the subtle lure and deceptions of this world's priorities. You live in the world, but you have different priorities from a different kingdom (John 17:16, 1 John 2:15-17, Matt 6:24).

Read Psalm 24:1-2. *What does God own?*

Read Gen 1:26. *What is the job description of people?*

God's promises of financial blessing all hinge upon your choice to relinquish ownership to Him and recognize that you are not the owner, but a manager (*steward*) of these resources. If you

refuse to relinquish ownership, turmoil, worry, and selfishness regarding money can easily begin to characterize your life. Peace comes from relinquishing doing money your way and choosing to follow God's desires for your money; the one who created everything & owns everything in the whole universe!

Is there any area in your life where you recognize you're trying to control it when you know it's actually God's to own and you are just to steward (or manage) it? If yes, take a moment and confess this and give it back to God!

God's Kingdom Principle: Giving & Receiving

"One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed."

~ Proverbs 11:24-25

"Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

~ Luke 6:38

"Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously"

~ 2 Corinthians 9:6

Giving that extends God's Kingdom to rule beyond our lives include these 4 aspects:

1. Giving your tithe - verses below
2. Giving to missionaries / the work of God in other places - Romans 10:14-15
3. Giving to the poor - Proverbs 19:17; 1 John 3:17-18
4. Giving through hospitality - 1 Peter 4:8-9; Romans 12:13; Matt 10:40-42; Hebrews 13:2

Tithe: In the Old Testament the tithe was a God-given commandment that reflected the reality that everything was from, and rightfully belonged to, the Lord. Each Israelite was to give the first ten percent of their harvest and livestock (*income*) each year back to the Lord. (Lev 27:30). It was a command by God, but the fulfillment was a matter of the conscience. There were no "tithe collectors." It was an act of obedient trust that celebrated the assurance that 1) God would provide for all their needs, 2) that everything they had belonged to the LORD and they were just stewards of God's resources, and 3) that since He was the owner, to fail to tithe was essentially stealing from God. The tithe always was given to the workers of the tabernacle/temple (the place that spiritually fed/cared for the people in that place), which is why we tithe to our local church.

Some say tithing is an Old Testament idea so it is not relevant for us today. We believe that it is a Biblical principle of lordship that helps us start being mindful that God is the owner of all we possess, however, if we truly want to respond to the New Testament idea of giving, it is far greater than 10 percent! For this greater response that goes above and beyond the lordship principle of tithing, we see giving to missionaries/the work of God in other places as a part of that greater level of generosity.

The Practical

1. Do you tithe 10% of all your income? If so, keep it up! Ask God how you can be even more free in your giving. Do you give offering above your tithe? Or can you take on more hours simply to get to tithe more?
 - If not, then let's get started! It's not too late. Pray and ask God to give you the faith to tithe first (before rent, groceries, etc.) on all income. Then talk together about when and how much you are going to tithe when the next money that the Father blesses you with comes in. Being specific with when and how much will help you be accountable to really take those practical steps. Remember, practical steps help our heart go to the right place spiritually and ultimately lead to greater blessing. Wait to see the miracles as you decide to tithe before paying bills.
2. Do you give regularly to your church mission's account or to a missionary you personally know? How much do you give? It's not about the amount, it's about the principle of seeing the Gospel spread through your finances. Let God do the work of multiplication through what you give, whether it's \$5 or \$100 a month.
3. The poor are literally all around us. We don't have to find a homeless person to categorize them as poor. Have you helped someone buy food before? Have you sat and listened to someone in need? Does anyone in your church not have a winter coat? International students don't get gov't aid, do you know someone well enough to know they have the basic necessities?
4. Giving through hospitality: Do you have people over to your place to cook for them (or Flex food on campus)? Or do you take someone out for ice cream? Do you invest time to help others? Have you ever seen someone have a basic need in clothing or food and bought it for them or given them some of your own? Ever put gas in someone's car? Ever willingly given someone a ride even though it may be out of your way? These are areas you can take baby steps in whether you are in abundance or barely making it through. This area of giving is important because it helps you see others needs and helps you love practically above and beyond. What is something you can do this week to give hospitably?