

I. Introduction

- A. As we have discussed in the last two sessions, having a generous heart in all ways (finance, possessions, time, love) is the biblical standard for believers.
- B. Generosity is defined as giving more than what is expected. In other words, it is exceeding the base line and giving beyond the norm.
- C. Generosity is as a response from a heart of love and a function of intimacy with Jesus.
- D. If generosity is our guideline, it's important we understand when to give, when not to give, and what are the biblical principles regarding giving.

II. When to give

- A. When the Bible instructs you to give
 - 1. First - before you do anything else with your money, give. Budget your giving first and you'll always have the ability to give.
 - Pro 3:9-10** Honor the LORD with your possessions, And with the firstfruits of all your increase; 10 So your barns will be filled with plenty, And your vats will overflow with new wine.
 - 2. Tithes – a tithe is ten percent of your income.
 - 3. Offerings - Everything given in addition to the tithe
 - 4. Aims - Gifts specifically to the poor and needy
- B. As you have opportunity
 - Mat 5:42** Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.
 - C. As you have the ability (2 Cor 8:12, 9:11)
 - D. As the Holy Spirit leads you (Rom 8:14)
 - E. When no one is looking (Mat 6:1-4)
- Mat 6:3-4** "But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, & so that your giving will be in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you."

III. When not to give

- A. When you have nothing to give (2 Cor 8:12)
 - 1. Giving is according to what you have and not according to what you don't have.

2. At the same time, God promises to supply seed (finances to give) to the sower (the one who gives). If you want to give, ask Him for something to give.

3. There is legitimacy to giving even if you are in a state of need, just as the Macedonians in 2 Corinthians 8:1-5 were commended for doing.

B. When you are unwilling

2Co 9:7 Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

1. God loves a willing, cheerful giver.

2. If you are begrudging a gift you should go back to the Lord and get your heart clear before you give.

C. When you feel pressured, manipulated, or coerced (2 Cor 9:7b)

D. When you're in discord with another believer

Mat 5:23-24 Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

E. When you're not in faith

Romans 14:23...whatever is not of faith is sin.

F. When the appeal to give is based on lust for things

1as 4:3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.

IV. Help in Understanding Tithing

A. The biblical teaching on tithing can be a bit confusing because of misunderstandings regarding the Old Testament as well as modern teachings that have attempted to leverage people into giving.

B. When we don't have direct commands from scripture on a particular topic we need to look at biblical precedent and practice. This way we can see how the first century saints would have thought about topics that the authors didn't specifically address in the New Testament.

C. Tithing is one of these topics. There are many New Testament verses on giving and generosity but only a few that mention tithing (Mat 23:23, Luke 11:42, Luke 18:12, Heb 7:2-9).

V. Answering Questions about Tithing

A. Since tithing was part of the Old Testament law are we still supposed to practice tithing? Aren't we under grace instead of law (Romans 6:14-15)?

1. Though tithing was a part of the law, the principle of tithing was in place hundreds of years before the law was given.

2. In Genesis 14 and 28 we see Abraham and Jacob pay tithes.

a. Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek (Gen 14:20)

b. Jacob made a vow to give God a tithe of all God gave him. (Gen 28:22)

3. Thus the principle of tithing is a biblical principle that transcends the law and is applicable for New Testament believers.

B. Is there a direct command in the New Testament directing believers to tithe?

1. No, there is not a verse in the New Testament that commands believers to tithe.

2. Instead there are multiple verses that command believers to give and give generously (1 Tim 6:18, Luke 6:35-38, Luke 14:12-14, Rom 12:8, 2 Cor 9:6).

3. Since the definition for generosity is giving beyond what is expected, it follows that generous giving would begin with a tithe and then go beyond that. Tithes are the baseline for giving, so generosity is giving beyond the baseline.

C. Is there a direct command in the New Testament directing believers to tithe to the local church?

1. Since there is not a New Testament command concerning tithing, there is also not a command that demands that the tithe has to go to the local church.

2. At the same time there is clear biblical precedent for the tithe to be paid to the worship center for the people of God. Israel always gave the tithe to the Levites and they did so by bringing it to the tabernacle and later the temple.

3. The practice of bringing the tithe to the storehouse (i.e. the temple) from Malachi 3:10 was well established in the Old Testament.

4. Furthermore, it's evident in the New Testament that the apostles and specifically Paul gave the believers clear directives about when and how to give offerings (Acts 4:32 – 5:11, Acts 11:29-30, 1 Cor 16:1-2, 2 Cor 8 & 9:12, 1 Tim 6:6-19).

D. Are you cursed according to Malachi 3:6 if you do not pay tithes?

1. The context of Malachi 3 is critical to properly understand this passage.

2. The nation of Israel was backslidden and had departed the covenant that they had with God. The covenant included blessings for obedience and cursings for disobedience (Deu 28).

3. Because they were rejecting the covenant and rejecting God by refusing to tithe, they were receiving the curses that were part of the covenant God made with them at Sinai.

4. These blessings and cursings do not apply to believers in the same way that they applied to the wayward nation of Israel.

5. God doesn't curse His children. He convicts them and calls them to repentance when they turn away from Him. If they continue to turn away they will reap the negative results of turning from Him. (Gal 6:7-8, James 4:1-10, Rom 6:23)

6. Sowing and reaping is a biblical principle that has a cause and effect relationship. As you sow you will reap. The same measure you use will be measured back to you. These are truths that show that how we give determines how we will receive. If follow the biblical commands to generosity including the principle of tithing it will very positively impact our finances. If, however, we choose to ignore the biblical commands to generosity including the principle of tithing, it will very negatively impact our finances.