

## Giving to the Cause of Christ

Of all the topics we can discuss, the topic of giving may be the most sensitive. People don't like for you to mention their money or to suggest they give some portion to the church. Some people won't join a church because they don't want to be financially obligated to it. Some folk "visit around" to various churches so no one can track whether or not they are tithing because they aren't tithing. This is a "trick" especially used by preachers who don't pastor, for they feel they are not required to anchor down and help in one church. They roam around and are best described as "spiritual gypsies."

### ***Who supports the work of the Lord***

Who is to pay the utility board for the electricity the church uses? Are we to send the bill to the United Way or some other helping-hand agency for them to pay? The first church met in homes with no electricity or running water or insurance or mortgage payment. Today, most churches have these expenses plus many more. Who pays? The people who worship at that church are obligated for the expenses whether or not they are members of that church. Try this- go to Kroger and load a shopping cart with food. Walk out with the food and go over to Ingles and pay for it. Make sense? No, you would never try this. Wherever you get spiritual food is where you give tithes and offerings. You need to contribute to the cost of the pew you sit on, the toilet facilities you use, the heat and AC system that keeps you comfortable.

### ***How much do we give***

The first instance on giving in the Bible is in Genesis chapter 14. Abraham met a mighty man named Melchizedek, king of Salem. Abraham was on a journey returning from the battlefield. We believe Melchizedek to be Jesus visiting the earth as a man. In Genesis 14:20, Abraham "*gave him tithes of all.*" Recognizing this man was God, he felt compelled to honor him with offerings. This is the first instance of giving to God in the Bible, excepting for sacrifices placed on altars.

Tithe means "tenth." So, Abraham gave Melchizedek ten percent of **all** he had. Not ten percent of his "take home" pay. Not ten percent of what he had left after he put 15% in his retirement savings plan.

Ten percent came from the total of what he had. The first check you should write on your paycheck is your tithes to God's house. We are to give God the "first-fruits," not leftover fruit. Tithing is an Old Testament term. The New Testament commands us in I Corinthians 16:2 *"Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come."* We are also instructed in Acts 11:29 *"Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea."* From I Corinthians 16:2 we find that the offering is to be brought on the *first day of the week*. We find from this verse that we bring the offering and lay it "in store." "In store" speaks of the church. The "first day of the week" is Sunday. Therefore, New Testament teaching is to bring your offering to the church on the Lord's Day which is Sunday. Do not give your offering to a TV or radio evangelist. It goes to the church. Do not give your offering to the Red Cross. The Red Cross is a good agency but it does not pray for you, get you saved and your children saved, conduct your funeral and marry your young, or feed you spiritual food. I am not opposed to giving to the Red Cross or any other helpful agency. But that which I give to such an agency is over and beyond what I set aside by the commands of God's Word to give to the house of God. God's storehouse COMES FIRST.

Malachi 3:8-10 reads *"Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But you say, wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."* The tithes, that is, ten percent, goes to the storehouse. We learn further from verse eight of this passage that we are to give "tithes and offerings." A person who only tithes is robbing God. What about giving offerings? The tithe goes to the storehouse, the church. Give offerings wherever you wish. Give offerings to missionaries, the Red Cross, the poor, or the hungry. Verse nine of this passage classifies a person who does not give tithes and offerings as a robber. Would you like for God to know you as a robber? What a shame this would be.

## ***Paying the preacher***

What does the Bible say about financial support for the preacher of the Gospel? It has plenty to say, but most notably the following passage in I Corinthians 9:6-14:

*“Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working? 7 Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? 8 Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? 9 For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? 10 Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. 11 If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? 12 If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ. 13 Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? 14 Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.”*

Verse 6 Paul says he has the power to “forebear” working. He was a tent-maker who worked at this occupation to earn money rather than receive offerings from the saints. However, he stated that this was not the way God intended. He could, if he so minded, “forebear” or forego working in the tent-making industry and receive necessary support from the saints.

Verse 7 explains that soldiers in warfare are not required to report to duty with their own uniform, gun, ammunition, tent, and food. Likewise, whosoever tended a vineyard was welcome to eat of the grapes of the vineyard. In similar fashion, a shepherd was expected to milk the sheep to obtain milk to drink to sustain him.

Verses 8 and 9 explain that the law of Moses disallowed the muzzling of an ox that treadeth corn. Corn was placed on the ground and an ox tied to a post. The ox circled round and round and with his feet treaded the corn. No muzzle was allowed on the ox. He was welcome to stop and eat of the corn anytime he desired.

Verses 13 and 14 give the final word: whosoever preaches the Gospel can live of the Gospel he preaches.

So, the Bible is clear. “Paying the preacher” for his labor in the Gospel is required by God’s Word.

### ***Promised rewards for giving***

- Giving to the Lord’s work will “open the windows of heaven” above your home. Malachi 3:10
- Giving is a way to get God’s attention. Everyone ought to want God to notice him. In Luke 21:1-4 a widow gave two mites. Jesus noticed her offering. Maybe men did not, but Jesus, the one who matters, noticed. The widow got recorded in the Bible for her giving, and here we are 2000 years later still reading about her.
- Giving is a way to get out of debt. In II Kings 4 a widow faced dreadful creditors. Perhaps all she owned was a vessel of oil. The man of God, Elisha, instructed her concerning her possession of oil. Doing as he commanded, she was able to pay all debts.
- Giving ensures you will never starve. A widow had a little meal in a meal-barrel in I Kings 17. Elijah the prophet commanded her to bake him a cake with the last remains of the meal in the barrel. She obeyed him. It was a time of famine. While the famine remained, her barrel continually had meal and she and her son were well fed. Show me a saved person who is “barely getting by” and, most likely, they are “God-robbers.”
- Giving is a way to have a dream fulfilled. The Shunamite woman of II Kings 4 had no child. In honor of the man of God Elisha, she and her husband built a room onto their home so that Elisha could have a place to rest as he traveled through the land preaching. Elisha was grateful for the room. So, he asked her what he could do to thank her for the room. Her reply was that “she had no child.” By the power of God granted unto Elisha, she conceived and a son was born. Her giving to the cause of the Gospel made a dream come true- a child was born!
- Giving is a way to be a blessing unto others. So, you say you can’t sing or preach or be a deacon. But, you can give! In John 6 a little lad who could not sing or play an instrument or preach gave his lunch of 5 loaves and 2 fishes. With that gift, 5000 men plus women and children were gloriously blessed! Twelve baskets were left over. You will never know until you get to heaven who you have blessed by your *giving*.

Don’t let Satan rob you by stopping you from giving. He will tell you that you cannot afford to give. He will tell you that you will starve if you give to the church. He will lie to you and tell you to postpone giving until your finances improve. If you WAIT until you can afford to give, you will NEVER START. START TODAY

honoring God with your substance. God will return what you give to you “pressed down, heaped up and running over.”

It all belongs to God. We may give him one-tenth, but he gave it all to us. The factory does not pay you- God does. He gave you the job and the breath and strength to perform the job. When you realize everything belongs to God, it will become easier for you to take the step of being a faithful giver. If 100% belongs to Him, how easy is it to give 10% tithe plus an offering back to Him?

Don't forget- we give not only treasure, but we give an allotment of our *time* and an allotment of our *talent* to the Lord's work. These two are just as important as giving treasure.