

# Financial Giving

Few subjects are likely to arouse an emotional response like that of *financial giving*. Every person is an authority on the subject. Some people believe the church should revel in prosperity while others have a poverty mentality. People believing in tithing refer to the Old Covenant, while others boast about the privileges of the New.

## Background

The concept of tithing occurred well before the introduction of the law. For example, Abraham gave a tenth (tithe) to Melchizedek, the Priest of the Most High God (Genesis 14:20). Jacob likewise promised a tenth of his possessions if God cared for him. However with the passing of time, the tithe became an integral part of Israelite society. Initially it appears that the families would bring part of the first fruits of their crops together and enjoy a meal. Later the tithe was used to provide support for the priests and to feed the poor. In time it became part of the requirements of keeping the 'Law' (Leviticus 27:30ff).

Blessing became associated with the giving of the tithe.

*'Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,' says the Lord Almighty, 'and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.'* Malachi 3:10.

Close examination of the New Testament indicates that Jesus nowhere nullifies the importance of the tithe. What He is against however, is tithing with a wrong attitude (Matthew 23:23-24).

## New Testament Church

The New Testament Church, on the other hand never once mentions the practise of tithing, although it is very strong on the importance of giving. Paul particularly gives helpful advice in the way it should happen.

- Offerings should be taken up on the first day of the week (1 Corinthians 16:2).
- Each individual should plan the amount they are to give (2 Corinthians 9:7).
- The church should take responsibility for distributing the tithe (1 Corinthians 16:1-3).
- People should give with a joyful and loving heart. (2 Corinthians 9:7)
- People should give in abundance, even if they only have little (2 Corinthians 8:2).
- A church should regularly give money to needy causes outside their own community (2 Corinthians 8:3,4).

- If a church learns how to give generously then God will generously meet their needs (2 Corinthians 9:6,10).

Since there is no evidence of the Early Church tithing does that mean then that it should not be taught? Certainly not! However, in teaching about tithing, it must not be taught as a legalistic doctrine whereby a person has to give a tenth of their income, as stewardship was the principle strongly emphasised in New Testament letters. Stewardship means that all we have belongs to God. It is out of this abundance that we freely give to God. Certainly people need to be encouraged to give 10% of their gross income while others may want to give up to 40% while others may only afford to give a little. Although we give because of our love to God, it is also true that God will give back to us and meet our needs in return. This initial step of giving often requires a step of faith. It is interesting that even pre-Christians who use this principle of giving to others in need, find that their needs are also met.

## Points to note

1. Full time workers supported by a church must not be embarrassed to teach on this subject of giving. 'The labourer is worthy of their wages.' Luke 10:7
2. Too many churches have a poverty mentality. They think it is honouring to God to continually be poor. Stand against that spirit invading the church as 'the earth is the Lord's and everything in it', (Psalm 24:1).
3. Staff workers supported by the church must set the example of giving with a right attitude. If they do not, then why should the church follow suit?
4. Money given and thereby entrusted to the leadership means it must be spent wisely. Make the financial records of the church freely available for all to see.
5. Churches should have their financial books audited once a year. This is a normal legal requirement for any 'Trust' in many countries.
6. The church offering should be counted by two trusted members soon after it has been collected. The total amount should be endorsed by their signatures.
7. It is generally advisable for pastors to avoid becoming signatories to financial accounts. The pastor must always appear to be above reproach. For small emergency funds for the poor that may be impractical.
8. Be generous in reimbursing guest speakers. Make sure that their travel costs are covered. Any extra should either go to their church or if retained by the speaker, at least be declared as a donation in their tax return form at the end of the financial year. Consider full time workers without an income having an extra amount to help them financially.