

August 2019

Dear Brethren:

Warm greetings to all brothers and sisters in Christ.

Jesus is the most generous person who ever lived. He left the comforts of heaven, took on human flesh, and gave His life on the stake so that we might live in Him. In response to Jesus' generosity, we are called to be generous. We are called to be generous with our money. We are called to steward our possessions. We are called to volunteer our time. No one argues over whether Christians should be generous, it is a hallmark of the Christian faith.

Tithe

When was the last time you used the word "tithe" in a conversation? Not very often, probably. The word "tithe" is not thrown around much in everyday conversations. But this does not mean it is an insignificant concept for Christians. In fact, it is a pretty straightforward concept that anyone can understand.

What Is a Tithe?

A "tithe" is a tenth. In the Bible, tithing is when you give ten percent of your annual earnings, produce, or possessions. In the Old Testament, we observe Abraham and Jacob offering a tithe to God in Genesis chapters 14 and 28. What is more, the Israelites were commanded to tithe from what they earned and produced during the year (Leviticus 27:30; Numbers 18:25–26; Deuteronomy 14:22–24; 2 Chronicles 31:5–6).

Are Christians Required to Tithe?

Tithing is a way of teaching us that God must be our first priority. *It is in the Bible:* "You must tithe all of your crops every year. Bring this tithe to eat before the Lord your God at the place he shall choose as his sanctuary; this applies to your tithes of grain, new wine, olive oil, and the firstborn of your flocks and herds. The purpose of tithing is to teach you always to put God first in your lives" (Deuteronomy 14:22–23, *The Living Bible*).

Over the past 2,000 years many different opinions have surfaced concerning tithing in the Bible. Christians are commanded to tithe. Tithing began in the Old Testament, and it is still commanded today. This position stands on two pillars:

First is that the requirement to tithe was made before the Mosaic covenant (Genesis 14:20; Hebrews 7:1–2). If this is true, then this means the tithe was not abolished in Christ and is still in force today.

Second, this position argues that Jesus affirmed the continuation of the tithe (Matthew 23:23). Since Jesus upheld the tithe, then Christians are commanded to tithe today.

Christians who take this position believe you should give at least ten percent to the church (more on this later) or to other outside causes. More or less, this position treats the tithe as a baseline of giving—not a limit.

Jesus Christ Personally Taught Tithing

Yes, Christ was the "Word"—the divine "Spokesman" for the *Father*, *from the beginning* (John 1:1–10). So the "Word"—who later became *Christ*—is the One who guided and blessed Abraham in tithing to God. And Christ is "the same yesterday, today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). Therefore, we must not negate or minimize this fundamental example of tithing set by the very "father" of God's faithful!

Did Jesus Christ abolish this practice in the New Testament? No! He followed it, as did His Apostles! Although some of the New Testament books were written even after the Temple was destroyed in 70 A.D., we find no scriptural command to stop tithing, and no indication that the apostles and the Apostolic Church ceased to tithe! Jesus recognized the importance of keeping the tithe and we should, too.

When we pay the tithes and offerings that God commands, we not only bring blessings to ourselves, we also allow God to use us to bless others. God uses our tithes to provide for other people and give them His much-needed Truth. So by diligently giving back to God ten percent of all our increase, we are forced to think of others—rather than selfishly retaining everything for ourselves (Philippians 2:4–5). Christ said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

When we are motivated by a desire to serve others, we develop a giving, sharing, caring and generous spirit. "The generous soul will be made rich, And he who waters will also be watered himself" (Proverbs 11:25, *New King James Version*). This means we should not give grudgingly or of necessity; for "God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7,

NKJV)! Of course, tithing is a *necessity*, but our motivation should extend beyond that—it should be to gladly and willingly please God and to help others.

What Are Offerings?

According to the Bible, "offerings" are a bit different than "tithing." Actually, what you think about "offerings" is largely based upon what you believe about "tithing." Then an offering is a financial gift you make to your church that is above and beyond your tithe (10%).

Then an offering is a financial gift you make to your local church— regardless of the amount you give. Basically, "offering" is what you call giving to your church. God also calls you to offer yourself as a living sacrifice to Him.

Check out these words from Paul:

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship (Romans 12:1, *New International Version*).

To offer yourself as a living sacrifice to God is to offer yourself entirely to Him. Offering your life to God is not something you do one time at the altar or on the days you feel good. Living sacrificially for God is something He calls everyone to do every day.

Practically speaking, Paul explains what this means in the next verse:

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will (Romans 12:2, *NIV*).

Living the Christian life is more than just saying no to bad things. Living the Christian life is really about living for God.

When it comes to offering yourself to the Lord, you are called to renew your mind. Practically speaking, you renew your mind by studying the Bible, meditating upon the scriptures, and hearing the Bible preached. Renewing your mind is one way you can learn how to live for God. Talking about living for God, one of the big areas we are called to be faithful in is our finances.

The first tithe:

And he blessed him and said: "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand" (Genesis 14:19–20, *NKJV*).

And Abram gave Him a tenth of everything.

Jacob offers a tithe:

Then Jacob made a vow, saying [to God], "If God will be with me, and keep me . . . all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You" (Genesis 28:20, 22, *NKJV*).

From what you have, take an offering for the LORD. Everyone who is willing is to bring to the LORD an offering (Exodus 35:5, *NIV*).

Woe to you, teachers of the law . . . You give a tenth . . . But you have neglected the more important matters—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former (Matthew 23:23, *NIV*).

For if you give, you will get! Your gift will return to you in full and overflowing measure, pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, and running over. Whatever measure you use to give—large or small—will be used to measure what is given back to you (Luke 6:38, *TLB*).

Tithes by the generous were used by God in the Old Testament to take care of His people. Today, God works through your tithes and offerings to advance His Kingdom and bless His people. To participate in God's work, it is essential to live a generous life.

Your brother in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eduardo Y. Cambil', written in a cursive style.

Eduardo Y. Cambil