

What Does the Bible Say About Giving?

Why do we give tithes and offerings in church?

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We've probably all heard these common complaints and questions: Churches today only care about money. There are too many abuses of church funds. Why should I give? How do I know the money will go to a good cause?

Some churches talk about and ask for money frequently. Most take up a collection weekly as part of the regular worship service. However, some churches don't receive formal offerings. Instead, they place offering boxes discretely in the building and money topics are only mentioned when a teaching in the Bible deals with these issues.

So, what exactly does the Bible say about giving? Since money is a highly sensitive area for most people, let's take some time to explore.

Giving shows He is Lord of our lives.

First and foremost, God wants us to give because it shows that we recognize He is truly the Lord of our lives.

Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. (James 1:17, NASB)

Everything we own and everything we have comes from God. So, when we give, we simply offer Him a small portion of the abundance He has already given to us.

Giving is an expression of our thankfulness and praise to God. It comes from a heart of worship that recognizes everything we have and give already belongs to the Lord.

God instructed Old Testament believers to give a tithe, or a tenth because this ten percent represented the first, most important portion of all they had. The New Testament does not suggest a certain percentage for giving, but simply says for each to give "in keeping with his income."

Believers ought to give according to their income.

On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come. (1 Corinthians 16:2, NASB)

Notice that the offering was set aside on the first day of the week. When we are willing to offer the first portion of our wealth back to God, then God knows He has our hearts. He knows we are submitted completely in trust and obedience to our Saviour.

We are blessed when we give.

"... remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" (Acts 20:35, NASB)

God wants us to give because He knows we will be blessed when we give generously to Him and to others. Giving is a paradoxical kingdom principle — it brings more blessing to the giver than to the recipient.

When we give freely to God, we receive freely from God.

Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return. (Luke 6:38, NASB)

There is one who scatters, and yet increases all the more, And there is one who withholds what is justly due, and yet it results only in want. (Proverbs 11:24, NASB)

God promises to bless us over and above what we give and also according to the measure that we use to give. But, if we hold back from giving with a stingy heart, we hinder God from blessing our lives.

Believers should seek God and not a legalistic rule about how much to give.

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

Giving is meant to be a joyful expression of thanks to God from the heart, not a legalistic obligation.

The value of our offering is not determined by *how much* we give, but *how* we give.

We find at least three important keys to giving in this story of the widow's offering:

Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny.

Calling His disciples to Him, He said to them, "Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the treasury; for they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on." (Mark 12:41-44, NASB)

God values our offerings differently than men do.

In God's eyes, the value of the offering is not determined by its amount. The passage says that the wealthy gave large amounts, but the widow's "fraction of a penny" was of much higher value

because she gave all that she had. It was a costly sacrifice. Notice that Jesus did not say she put in more than *any* of the others; He said she put in more than *all* the others.

Our attitude in giving is important to God.

The text says Jesus "watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury." Jesus observed the people as they gave their offerings, and He watches us today as we give. If we give to be seen by men or with a stingy heart toward God, our offering loses its value. Jesus is more interested and impressed by *how* we give than *what* we give.

1. We see this same principle in the story of Cain and Abel. God evaluated Cain and Abel's offerings. Abel's offering was pleasing in God's eyes, but He rejected Cain's. Rather than giving to God out of thankfulness and worship, Cain presented his offering in a way that displeased God. Maybe he had hoped to receive special recognition. Cain knew the right thing to do, but he didn't do it. God even gave Cain an opportunity to make things right, but he refused.
2. God watches **what** and **how** we give. God not only cares about the quality of our gifts to Him but also the attitude in our hearts as we offer them.

God doesn't want us to be overly concerned with how our offering is spent.

At the time Jesus observed this widow's offering, the temple treasury was managed by the corrupt religious leaders of that day. Yet Jesus did not mention anywhere in this story that the widow should not have given to the temple.

Although we ought to do what we can to ensure that ministries we give to are good stewards of God's money, we can't always know for certain that the money we give will be spent correctly or wisely. We can't allow ourselves to be overly burdened with this concern, nor should we use this as an excuse not to give.

It's important for us to find a good church that wisely manages its financial resources for God's glory and for the growth of God's kingdom. But once we give to God, we need not worry about what happens to the money. That is God's problem to solve, not ours. If a church or ministry misuses its funds, God knows how to deal with those responsible.

We rob God when we fail to give offerings to Him.

"Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, 'How have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings." (Malachi 3:8, NASB)

This verse speaks for itself. We aren't fully surrendered to God until our money is dedicated to Him.

Our financial giving reveals a picture of our lives surrendered to God.

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. (Romans 12:1, NASB)

When we truly recognize all that Christ has done for us, we'll want to offer ourselves wholly to God as a living sacrifice of worship to Him. Our offerings will flow freely from a heart of gratitude.

A Giving Challenge

Let's consider a giving challenge. We've established that tithing is no longer the law. New Testament believers are under no legal obligation to give a tenth of their income. Yet, many believers see the tithe as the minimum to give — a demonstration that everything we have belongs to God. So, the first part of the challenge is to make the tithe your starting point for giving.

Malachi 3:10 says:

"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this," says the LORD of hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows."

This verse suggests that our giving should go to the local church (the storehouse) where we are taught God's Word and nurtured spiritually. If you're not currently giving to the Lord through a church home, begin by making a commitment. Give *something* faithfully and regularly. God promises to bless your commitment. If a tenth seems too overwhelming, consider making it a goal. Giving might feel like a sacrifice at first, but soon you'll discover its rewards.

God wants believers to be free from the love of money, as the Bible says in 1 Timothy 6:10:

"For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil..." (NASB).

We may experience times of financial hardship when we can't give as much as we'd like, but the Lord still wants us to trust Him in those times and give. God, not our pay check, is our provider. He will meet our daily needs.

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