

For Love & Money – Our Tithes and Offerings

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First instance of Offerings – **Genesis 4** – Cain & Abel’s offering
Offerings’ purpose – atonement & thanks

Genesis 14 – Abraham gives a tenth (tithe) of his battle spoils to Melchizedek, a ‘king-priest’

Many different types of offerings are spoken of in OT – different times, different purposes, but mainly for atonement. There were also ‘thank’ offerings & ‘freewill’ offerings.

Tithes were mandatory. All were required to give a tenth of their crop or livestock, the ‘firsts’ to honor God. This was done through the Levites, the Israelite priesthood. God set aside the tribe of Levi to be the priests and administer the Tabernacle, and later, the Temple. (see **Numbers 18**)
The purpose of the tithe was 1) to honor God 2) to pay the priests 3) to help the needy.
When the Levites received the tithes of the people (the best, the firsts) the Levites were required to immediately give a tenth (the best of the best) as a sacrifice to God. They then took care of their own needs, as well as distributing to the needy.

Here we see the beginning of ‘storehouse’ giving. People bring their tithes into a central location, the storehouse, to honor God. Through those gifts, the priests were paid, and the needy were helped.

Throughout the OT prophets, God speaks to the ‘heart’ of the people in their giving. He begins to talk about how He hates their offerings, because they were being given mechanically, ritually, with no love, no motivation to honor God and to help others. The last time the tithe is spoken of in the OT is **Malachi 3: 8-10**. God says the people were robbing Him by withholding their tithes and offerings. He then challenges the people to test Him by giving, and see what blessings He will pour out.

So, all through the OT, we see the practice of tithes and offerings, given to the storehouse, to honor God, support the priests, and to help the needy. Did it continue into NT times?

In **Matthew 23: 23** and **Luke 11: 42**, Jesus speaks against the religious leaders for tithing without love of God, justice, mercy, or faithfulness as their motivation. He tells them they should tithe, but do it with the proper motivation. In **Matthew 5: 23**, He also reminds anyone who is taking their offering to the altar and remembers something you have against your brother; go patch things up first, then bring your offering. Again, He stresses giving with the proper heart & motivation. So, even Jesus speaks of tithes and offerings still in effect during His time.

However, as with all spiritual matters, Jesus raises the standards for those who choose to follow Him. In **Mark 12: 28-34**, Jesus commends a spiritual leader for recognizing that love is more important than burnt offerings. Then in **Mark 12: 41-44**, Jesus commends a widow for “giving out of her poverty,” a pointed reference to sacrificial giving. Again, Jesus raises the standard from even the tithe and into the realm of sacrifice. One way for us to take this to heart is to ask ourselves “Does my giving ‘hamper’ my desired lifestyle?” If not, then there probably is no real sacrifice.

By the time Paul begins setting up churches, there already is a common theme of giving being practiced. See **I Corinthians 16** & **II Corinthians 8-9**. We see here that people are asked to give 1) on the first day of each week (Sunday) 2) proportionally to their income 3) sacrificially 4) gracefully 5) willingly 6) for the help of others 7) cheerfully 8) generously; **so that** 1) God may be praised and 2) others might be helped. And in **Galatians 6: 6**, Paul requests that we share all good things with those who instruct us in the Word. (Also see **I Corinthians 9: 13-14** about preachers earning a living.) A good question to follow this up with: “Where is it that I receive the opportunity to grow spiritually?” And that is what the local church is to provide. So, when we see it in this light, our tithes should go to the local church, the storehouse. As always, we give our tithes to 1) Honor God 2) support our pastors 3) help the needy. So, all things are given to honor God. It just happens to flow through a local church called Hillside Christian Church. Out of those tithes, our ministers are paid a salary (which they also tithe) and the church gives over 10% to missions and benevolence. And the blessings beyond that are a facility, utilities, programs, children’s books and toys, transportation to summer camps, teaching seminars, etc. All geared toward helping individuals worship God and grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

The question of tithing time and talents instead of money is important. However, when we read in **Romans 12: 1-2** that we are to offer our lives as a living sacrifice, then we get back to the fact that *everything* we are and *everything* we have is from God. Then what part of our lives are we to turn over to our Lord? EVERYTHING. Then we could get to the tithe of *everything*; 10% of our money, 10% of our time, 10% of our talents. Again, sacrificially, it ALL belongs to Him. If He is truly our Lord, we won’t have trouble deciding what percentage of our lives we give back. But, if we haven’t offered our whole lives to Him, then we’ll always be trying to figure out how much we are required to relinquish.

Some detail questions:

Q: Is it 10% before, or after taxes?

A: How much is from God? ALL of it. Think about it; tithing ALL income, interest, dividends, tax refunds, gifts – it is ALL from Him.

Q: Should I itemize my giving as charitable contributions? Doesn’t that ‘taint’ my motive?

A: Ask yourself, “If the United States government takes away the benefit of deducting my charitable contributions, would I still give?” If the answer is “Yes,” then continue to itemize and realize that by taking advantage of this benefit, it leaves you more to give to 1) Honor God 2) help others.

Q: Isn’t God just as interested in me giving my *time* as He is my money?

A: Yes He is. He’s interested in ALL of it! We owe it ALL to God, so 10% of income, time, talents, etc. is just a beginning. As we begin to understand *His* ownership, we can begin to give sacrificially in ALL areas of our lives.

Q: I give to other Christian organizations, even tithe. A percentage comes to HCC, a percentage to other Christian groups, but I give a tithe when it’s all totaled. Are you saying that’s wrong?

A: Certainly not! I would never argue that you are not benefiting the kingdom of God – you are! Scripturally, the ‘firsts’ the first 10% should come to the ‘storehouse,’ your local church. Then above that certainly give sacrificially wherever you feel lead. Just a note of personal experience: I used to give in the same manner – 10% total given to several organizations. When I started giving my ‘firsts’ to the storehouse, God gave me the ability to give more money to more organizations and individuals than I ever had before.

Remember – **God’s math and our math don’t work the same.**
He can do more with our gifts than we ever dreamed possible!