

REFLECTIONS ON TITHING

“What is Tithing?”

Tithing is making a voluntary, systematic contribution of financial support to the Church. Voluntary: giving out of love and gratitude for all God gives you. Systematic: giving ten percent of your gross income (that is, before any deductions) as you receive it. The Old Testament Guideline for giving is a “tithe” or “tenth” of total property. *“Of all that thou givest me, I will give the tenth to thee.”* (Genesis 28:22)

Tithing symbolizes and helps express one’s commitment to Christ and the Church. A regular plan for giving can help: 1) Enrich the person’s life -- through giving, we offer ourselves in service and devotion to God. We become stronger in faith, more aware of others’ needs, and we experience the joy of sharing with others in Christ. Tithing is a plan not simply to heighten giving but to deepen living; and 2) Accomplish the Church’s Mission -- reliable funding allows the Church to plan for expenses, carry out programs, maintain outreach activities and help those in need.

The Old Testament contains many references to “tithing.” It refers to tithing as being required of all. A tenth of possessions such as animals, grains, etc. (the first tenth or “first fruits”) were to be set aside and offered to God in thanks for all the blessings we are given. The custom of tithing may have started before the 8th Century, B.C. *“All the tithes of the land, whether of the seed or of the land or of the fruit of the trees is the Lord’s.”* (Leviticus 27:30)

According to the New Testament, Jesus affirmed tithing as a form of Stewardship. Stewardship means using everything God has given us -- life, talents, possessions -- to serve God with love and gratitude. Jesus encouraged giving in proportion to what we have received, when He praised the poor widow for her generous gift. *“Truly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all; for all these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God, but she out of her poverty, has put in all the livelihood that she had.”* (Luke 21:3-4) The Apostle Paul directed his followers to plan their contributions. *“On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper.”* (1 Corinthians 16:2) The success of tithing depends on the understanding and participation of Church members.

Reasons to Tithe: Everything we have comes as a gift from God. To show our faith and (thanksgiving, we can return a part of God’s gifts to us to help the Church carry out its work. Tithing is a way of loving C through giving, we show our love for God and humanity and receive God’s love; growing it is a challenge that helps us develop self-discipline, responsibility and maturity; helping

Tithing supports programs to help those with material and spiritual needs, *“search has received a gift, employ it for one another as good stewards of God’s varied grace.”* (1 Peter 4:10) Everyone can Tithe! Anyone who has an income can plan ahead to make tithing a regular part of his or her budget. Employees: Regularly set aside 10% of your salary... Self-Employed: Compute the tithe based on your income after business (not personal) deductions... Retired People: Tithe even if income is small. The amount is not as important as planned and consistent giving. Teens: Giving 10% from your joys or allowance will establish the tithing habit early... Children: Even youngsters should put aside an amount each week for God.

How and When to Tithe?

1. Be Systematic - The key is to make tithing a normal part of your budget. Whatever your program of giving, keep records, be prompt and try not to miss dates.
2. Tithe Weekly - Weekly or monthly tithing helps your Church plan its budget. If you don't receive income on a regular basis, tithe when you receive it.
3. Tithing is not a substitute for other Christian obligations such as volunteering your time for Church related activities. Think of tithing as an important part of your total stewardship responsibilities. *"The first of the first fruits of your ground you shall bring into the house of the Lord your God"* (Exodus 23:19)

How is Your Tithe Used?

Tithing has vital, practical uses as well as spiritual significance. Tithing helps the Church:

1. Meet its basic, needs
 - a. Tithing is Necessary: Every Church has fixed expenses, which must be met every month: building maintenance, utilities, salaries, etc. Through tithing, the Church can meet its practical responsibilities without putting a burden on just a few members;
 - b. Tithing is Reliable: Tithing provides a regular, predictable source of funding. This reduces the need for constant fundraising activities and frees time and energy for other responsibilities of Christian life.
2. Reach out to people
 - a. Proclaiming the Gospel: Many of the world's people have not had the chance to learn about (The Christ. The Church uses tithing funds to help reach out to those people and strives to unite all nations in the peace of Jesus Christ. Tithes help to support missions, Christian publications, etc.
 - b. Helping those in need: Your tithes support the Church's worldwide efforts to combat disease, ignorance and poverty. Programs at home and abroad include: funding hospital and schools, providing information services, and participating in a wide variety of civic and charitable activities.

The Rewards of Tithing:

Tithing is as meaningful to you as it is to those who benefit from your contributions. Tithing brings:

- a. **JOY:** Tithing is a concrete way of acknowledging God's presence in our lives. Serving, in response to God's grace and generosity, brings a happiness that cannot be achieved through more self-centered activities;
- b. **AWARENESS:** Tithing is a way of showing concern for others throughout the world. As we become more sensitive to others' needs, we grow closer to God; and
- c. **FULFILLMENT:** Tithing regularly strengthens the sincerity of our commitment to Christ. Tithing itself becomes deeply satisfying, a way to follow Christ.

Make tithing part of your life in Christ. It is an important way to: a) express your gratitude to God C for the gifts and blessings you have received; b) renew your faith and grow closer to Christ; and c) help your Church remain strong and fulfill its mission. Give with a Loving and Generous Heart: God will reward you with joy and fulfillment. *“For the measure you give with will be measured back to you.”* (Luke 6:3 8) *“Will a man/woman rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, in what way have we robbed you?’ In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse. For you have robbed Me, even this whole nation. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and PRO VE 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 such blessings that there will not be room enough to receive it.”* (Malachi 3:8-10)

As you pray over these reflections, we hope that you will accept God’s challenge to “Approve” His love by becoming a Tither. Try it for a few months and see what happens!