

# **THE TRUTH ABOUT TITHING, GIVING, SOWING AND REAPING**

A Study to reveal the Biblical Truths of  
Tithing, Giving, Sowing and Reaping

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# **INTRODUCTION**

We are told that we have to tithe to our local church in order to be blessed by God. We are told to sow seeds (money) into our local church in order to obtain provisions from God. We are told to give for the building fund, and other expenses of the church organization. However, we are not told about giving to each other to meet needs. Christians have been giving their money to ministers and pastors with the belief that God will bless them for doing so. People suffer and go without because they believe that if they give their money to the local church that God will bless them for it. Christians suffer in their giving and the ministers who receive continue to build their kingdoms, drive in their luxurious cars, and live in extravagant homes. Now there is nothing wrong with a minister having these things but not at the expense of others<sup>1</sup>.

I began to notice that people were experiencing hardships and lack instead of the blessings they were promised. Did God go back on his word? Did God really command us to tithe in order to be blessed? Was the promise really from God? I, along with other Christians, began to see that something was wrong. Would a just God cause pastors, ministers and the like to live in luxury at the expense of the people in their respective congregations? Would God tell us to pledge allegiance to an organization at the expense of the individual? Is God more concerned about buildings than he is of me?

I began a search to discover the truth about tithing when I noticed that two prominent ministers teach different things about tithing. "Which one should I believe?" was my prayer to God. God said to believe Him. Thus the search began. My search also led me to learn more about giving, sowing and reaping since they are very related.

The purpose of this study guide is to reveal the truth concerning tithing, giving, sowing and reaping. This study guide will present the facts of scripture and the general message of those scriptures regarding the tithe, our giving, sowing and reaping. This study is not based on presuppositions rather on facts. Anyone can look at the same scriptures and the same arguments and come to the same conclusion because I believe that the facts (scriptures) reveal the truth.

Let me make something very clear. **This study guide is not a study on why we should not tithe or that we should not tithe.** If you are looking for reasons to show that you should not tithe then you may need to check your heart to determine if your motive is to hoard your money. If your motive is to discover the truth about tithing and giving then this study will help you greatly.

***THIS STUDY GUIDE IS NOT TO SHOW THAT WE SHOULD NOT TITHE  
BUT TO REVEAL THE TRUTH ABOUT TITHING***

## **METHODICAL STUDY METHOD**

I think it expedient to inform you of the study method that I used to analyze the topics in this study. I did not use an opinion-to-scripture (deductive) approach. That is, I did not assume an answer and then found scriptures that support it. I used a scripture-to-truth (inductive) approach to determine the truth about tithing, giving, sowing, and reaping. I used a study method called methodical study. Every scripture that I could find concerning the topic matter was analyzed and a summary for each individual scripture was drawn. All of the individual scripture summaries were also analyzed to find the common factor or common teaching and then a general conclusion was made.

There are two basic ways to study the Bible: Inductive and Deductive.

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<sup>1</sup> Some ministers are self sufficient in their own businesses or investments. Some pastors and ministers do have full time jobs. So we cannot judge them if we see them living in luxury. It could be the benefits of their own labor.

**Deductive** Bible study involves the validation of a preconceived idea (belief) or presupposition. That is, a Biblical truth is assumed and scripture is located to prove the truth (usually a dogma). Deductive Bible study is very subjective because it centers on the person's preconceived ideas and beliefs and not the truth emanating from the facts of the scriptures. The deductive student will tend to read his/her ideas and beliefs into the scriptures instead of extracting the truths from the scriptures.

**Inductive** Bible study involves the gathering of facts from scripture and then drawing conclusions that are revealed by the facts. Inductive Bible study is an objective Bible study. That is, any conclusions that are made can be easily tested against the scriptures themselves since the conclusion came from the scriptures. ***The methodical Bible study method I used is inductive.***

## ***THE FOUNDATION OF METHODICAL BIBLE STUDY***

The driving force behind the methodical study of the Bible is to **allow scripture to interpret itself**. By understanding the facts of the scriptures and the facts surrounding the scriptures (culture for example), we can better understand the scriptures in a way that was intended. This method of study is valid because it allows the scripture to "speak" for themselves. This provides a common and objective way to understand scripture else different people will have different interpretations making it appear that a scripture can have more than one message. Though this does happen anyway.

## ***VALIDATION VERSUS DEDUCTION***

Validation and deduction are very similar on the surface. Both begin with an idea or teaching that is supported by scripture. The difference is very important though. In deduction, we assume that the teaching or idea that we have is true and we do not question the truthfulness of what we have heard. We only go to the Bible, assuming our idea to be true, and find scriptures that support our presupposed truth.

Validation begins with a teaching or belief but it is not assumed to be true. Someone who validates a teaching starts with the teaching and searches the scriptures to test the teaching. In this case validation is very much like induction but with a starting point. The starting point is not an assumed truth but rather an idea to TEST. **Deduction revolves around proving something that is assumed to be true and validation revolves around testing something that is presented as truth.**

<p><b><i>DEDUCTION</i></b> <i>attempts to prove an assumed truth and</i> <b><i>VALIDATION</i></b> <i>tests a PRESENTED TEACHING</i></p>
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## **PART 1 - TITHING**

The first section of our study will deal with the law of the tithe. We will analyze the scriptures in detail to discover what the truth is concerning tithing. We will also look at various arguments for and against tithing to see how they stand up against the scriptures.

### **LAW**

I think it is important to discuss the LAW since the teaching of tithing centers around the Old Testament law. The following is an excerpt from the Holman Bible Dictionary.

**LAW, TEN COMMANDMENTS** *Law refers both to the revelation of the will of God in the Old Testament and to the later elaboration on the law referred to as the "traditions of the elders" in the New Testament (for example, Mark 7:5). The term law may be used for a commandment, a word, a decree, a judgment, a custom, or a prohibition. The Hebrew term most frequently translated "law" in the Old Testament is torah, used more than 200 times. The central idea of torah is that of instruction received from a superior authority on how to live. Torah in the Old Testament came to mean the way of life for faithful Israelites. The Torah is more than just "laws"; it includes the story of God's dealing with humankind and with Israel.*

*Jesus inaugurated a new era in which the Law as understood by the Jews of His day would no longer be the guiding principle for the Kingdom of God (Luke 16:16). Nevertheless, Jesus claimed not to have come to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it (Matt. 5:17-20). That is, Jesus moved the understanding of the Law from its external, legalistic meaning to its spiritual one. Moving from outward observance to inward motivation and intention is Jesus' concern (Matt. 5:21,22,27,28). He pushes the Law out to its ultimate meaning (thus filling it full). In this sense Jesus affirmed the heart and the spirit of the Law. He moved to a deeper level of meaning, to the spirit behind the Law, which God had intended from the beginning.*

Paul gives us the purpose of the Old Testament laws,

**(Galatians 3:24-25 NIV)** *"So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. {25} Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law."*

The law had a definite purpose and Christ has fulfilled that purpose. Jesus said,

**(Matthew 5:17 NIV)** *"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them."*

### **KEEPING THE WHOLE LAW**

I must point out a very important fact before I get into the discussion of tithing. The Bible says,

**(James 2:10-11 KJV)** *For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. {11} For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.*

The law revealed the will of God as we said earlier. So if we being law keepers break one law then we have gone against the will of God and therefore guilty—period. If we are to keep the law of tithing then we must keep the whole law of tithing. Let me define the tithing law.

### **THE TITHING LAW**

*God, according to Malachi 3:8-10, commands Christians to pay 10% of their gross income to their local church. Christians must pay this 10% before any other financial obligations are met. God cannot bless Christians unless this tithe has been paid.*

I should point out that this tithing law as written comes from man not God. Note that this tithing law is not consistent with the tithing law of the Old Testament since more was involved with tithing at that time. There is also the matter of what was tithed and how. Right from the start we see a discrepancy between the Bible's teaching and the teaching of the church.

### **TITHE DEFINED**

Let's define the word tithe from the Bible. There are five words in the Bible that were translated into the word tithe or tithes.

1. Hebrew ma'aser or ma'asar (plural form ma'asrah) means a tenth.
2. Hebrew 'asar means to accumulate; to tithe, i.e. take or give a tenth. Used only in **Deuteronomy 14:22** and **Nehemiah 10:38**.
3. Greek ap-od-ek-at-o'-o means to tithe (as debtor or creditor).
4. Greek dekatoo means to tithe, i.e. to give or take a tenth. Used only in **Hebrews 7:5,9**
5. Greek dekate means a tenth, i.e. as a percentage. Used only in **Hebrews 7:8**

I will use the definition of tenth for the word tithe. Therefore, a tithe means one tenth of something.

### **SCRIPTURE EXAMINATIONS**

Let's first review the scriptures in the Bible that deal with tithing. The scriptures below were found by looking up the words 'tithe', 'tithes', and 'tenth' using the Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible.

#### **GENESIS 14:20 – ABRAHAM'S TITHE**

Abraham gave the High Priest of God, Melchizedek, a tenth of all of the booty that he obtained from war after rescuing his nephew Lot.

SCRIPTURE LESSON

This scripture indicates that tithing may have been a common or at least familiar practice well before the Law was given to Moses. We also note that Abraham tithed from the spoils of war and not from his personal belongings.

**GENESIS 28:22 – JACOB’S VOW AND TITHE**

Jacob was filled with awe and reverence for God whom he believed was present in the place where he slept (Bethel, formerly Luz). Filled with awe and reverence, he made a vow to God. Because of the way Jacob made the vow, it does not appear that he was trying to bargain with God. The “if” should be understood to mean that what God said was future and Jacob was simply accommodating that fact in his speech. Therefore, Jacob vowed that God would be his God and that he would give a tenth of everything he gains. Jacob in a sense promised to honor God with his increase. We can also assume that Jacob’s heart was in the right place because of God’s response in **Numbers 31:13**.

SCRIPTURE LESSON

An awe and reverence of God motivated Jacob’s vow to Him, which included a tithe of all his increase. Tithing can be used to honor and/or revere God. Notice that Jacob initiated this action not God.

**LEVITICUS 27:30-33 – THE HOLY TITHE**

In these scriptures God establishes that the tithe was holy (sacred, set apart) to Him. God further establishes that the tithe of the land is holy.

We also see in the scripture that there was not a one-to-one relation between the tithe and its value. If a person redeemed their tithe then they had to add 20% (a fifth) to it. This seems to indicate that God made provisions for someone to buy the tithe back for himself.

In addition to this we see that there was to be no distinguishing a good or bad animal. Every tenth animal that passed under the rod<sup>2</sup> belonged to God.

SCRIPTURE LESSON

This scripture establishes that the tithe of the land and the herd was holy to God. It also seems to indicate that the tithe could be redeemed. There was to be no distinction of good or bad tithes.

**NUMBERS 18:21,24 -- THE LEVITE’S WAGES**

All of the tithes were for the children of Levi for an inheritance, for the service they rendered in the tent of meeting (tabernacle).

SCRIPTURE LESSON

God made sure that His workers were compensated for their services.

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<sup>2</sup> The sheep or calves were shut in one fold, in which was a narrow door, to let them out one at a time. A person stood by the door, with a rod dipped in vermilion in his hand, and counted the animals as they passed touching every tenth animal with the rod thus marking the tithe.

### ***NUMBERS 18:26 - 32 -- THE TITHE OF THE TITHE***

These scriptures establish that the Levites were to present to the priests a tenth of the tithes they received from the people. The tithes that they presented to the priests would be reckoned to them as produce from the threshing floor and winepress. We also see that they were to present to the priests the best and holiest parts. The amount that they kept could be eaten anywhere because it was their wages for the work they did in the tent of meeting.

#### **SCRIPTURE LESSON**

Even the workers (ministers) of God were required to give to meet needs.

### ***DEUTERONOMY 12:6-11,17 – INSTRUCTION FROM GOD***

Here God is giving the Hebrew people instructions for living in the land that He has given them. One of the things that he told them to do was to bring their tithe, as well as other offerings, to the place that He decides to place his name. They were not to do whatever they wanted.

#### **SCRIPTURE LESSON**

There was a specific place that the people had to bring their tithes.

### ***DEUTERONOMY 14:22-29 – TITHING GUIDELINES***

God instructs the people to set aside a tenth of all that the land produces each year. They were to eat the tithe of the grain, new wine and oil and the firstborn of their herds and flocks. As in **Deuteronomy 12:17**, they were to eat it in the presence of the Lord (where he chose). The purpose of this tithe and for eating it in God's presence was so they would learn to revere Him. Also, if the place that God chose was too far for them to travel with their tithe, then they were supposed to exchange it for silver, go to the place determined by God, exchange the silver for whatever they wanted and eat it in the presence of God.

At the end of every three years, they were instructed to keep the tithe in their towns so that the Levites, foreigners, fatherless, and widows who lived in the town would eat and be satisfied. Also, by doing this (meeting the needs of the people and obeying God) they would be blessed by God.

#### **SCRIPTURE LESSON**

We see that the people **ATE** the tithe where God chose and the needs of the Levites as well as others that lacked where met by the tithe (every three years).

### ***DEUTERONOMY 26:12 – THE THIRD YEAR TITHE***

God instructs the people how to offer the third year tithe that was for the Levites, aliens, fatherless, and widows. This tithe was to be given to these people and they were supposed to recite what the Lord commanded them to say when they presented the tithe to the Levites. See also **Deuteronomy 14:28-29**.

#### **SCRIPTURE LESSON**

There was a specific procedure that the people had to follow when presenting their 'third year' tithe.

### ***2 CHRONICLES 31:5-6 – TITHING REINSTATED***

King Hezekiah reinstated the Levites and priests to their positions. He contributed from his own possessions for

offerings. He also ordered the people in Jerusalem to give the portion that was due the Levites and the priests, (which was a tenth of the land's produce). The people then began to bring an abundance of things as the king ordered including the tithe that was due the Levites.

### SCRIPTURE LESSON

Blessings come when we walk in the realm of obedience to God even if we have been in disobedience.

### **2 CHRONICLES 31:12 – AN ABUNDANCE GIVEN**

The Hebrew people began to bring their tithes and other offerings to the temple during King Hezekiah's reforms. There was so much food that there were heaps left over.

### SCRIPTURE LESSON

This scripture seems to reveal that obedience to God brings about blessing and that God will supply all that is needed to fulfill what he requires of us. In this case he blessed them abundantly so that they could give abundantly. We also see in **verse 10** that food was the purpose of the offerings along with the required sacrifice to God.

### **NEHEMIAH 10:37-38 – TITHING REINSTATED**

Verse 37 records the law from Moses that the people would bring their various offerings to the priest and bring their tithes to the Levites. Verse 38 establishes again that the priest would accompany the Levites when they receive the tithes from the people and that the Levites would take a tenth of the tithes that they receive to the storerooms of the treasury in the house of God.

### SCRIPTURE LESSON

The key to these scriptures is maintaining the house of God and obeying the laws that God sent. God will restore the backslider if he/she begins to walk in obedience. We also see the importance to support those who are working for God.

### **NEHEMIAH 12:44 – STOREROOM OVERSEER**

Nehemiah appointed men to oversee the storerooms of the temple. The storerooms stored the tithes and offerings from the people.

### **NEHEMIAH 13:11-12 – THE PEOPLE TITHE**

Here Nehemiah had just rebuked the officials for neglecting the house of God. He also had discovered that the tithes were not being collected. Therefore, He stationed the officials at their posts and the people began to bring their tithes to the Levites.

### SCRIPTURE LESSON

If the leadership is not in place according to God's will then the people may be forced to walk in disobedience as well. If the Levites were not in their place then the people could not present their tithes. This is not to say that the people were trying to do so but the absent Levites would have made it a problem if some were. Also if the people stopped tithing then the Levites and priests would have to find other means to eat thus causing the problem described above.

### ***MALACHI 3:8-10 – BRING WHOLE TITHE***

The heart of the people was against God. They held God in contempt and accused Him of not loving them. This heart condition effected their worship and religious activities. The fact that they weren't tithing was because of their heart becoming cold towards God. God first admonishes them about their heart condition and calls them to return (see verse 7).

The purpose of these tithes was for food (which is consistent with other scriptures on tithing). He says that the blessings will be so great that the storehouses will not have enough room to hold it all. This is consistent with Hezekiah's reform. Consider that tithing was a commandment of God that the people were not obeying. Therefore, they were walking in disobedience and thus a curse.

#### **SCRIPTURE LESSON**

Our activities begin with the heart. The reason we may not give or obey God is because our heart has grown cold and we just don't respect or honor God enough to obey Him. Our revelation of the reality of God can become less significant then the circumstances around us thus leading to disobedience.

### ***MATTHEW 23:23 – THE HYPOCRITICAL TITHE***

Here Jesus is rebuking the religious leaders for their actions. The Scribes and Pharisees would tithe from the smallest herb in their garden. However, Jesus told them that they have neglected the more important matters of the law, namely justice, mercy, and faithfulness. Jesus also stated that they should have practiced the more important matters of the law without neglecting the tithe.

#### **SCRIPTURE LESSON**

The more important matters of the law are justice, mercy, and faithfulness. However, tithing was a practice that was commanded in the law as well. The act of tithing does not make one righteous because Jesus called the Scribes and Pharisees hypocrites even though they tithed.

### ***LUKE 11:42 – THE HYPOCRITICAL TITHE***

This is very similar to **Matthew 23:23**. However, in this account Jesus states that they neglect justice and the love of God.

#### **SCRIPTURE LESSON**

Justice and the love of God is more important then the activity of tithing.

### ***LUKE 18:12 – A PRIDEFUL PRAYER***

This is the record of a Pharisee's prayer. He states, among other things, how he tithes from everything that he gets. Jesus tells us that the Pharisee was not justified before God because he was exalting himself. The act of tithing does not justify us before God.

#### **SCRIPTURE LESSON**

Any act can be used to exalt oneself. Even a good act does not justify us before God. Tithing does not make us righteous.

## ***HEBREWS 7:2-9 – PAUL RECOLLECTS ABRAHAM’S TITHE***

Paul uses the event where Abraham gave Melchizedek a tenth of everything to prove that Jesus Christ is superior in his priestly order than the Levites through Abraham.

### **SCRIPTURE LESSON**

Abraham gave Melchizedek a tenth of the spoils of war before there was a law to tithe. The practice of giving a tenth existed before the Law of Moses. It can also be argued that Abraham gave Melchizedek a tenth out of respect of who he was—the high priest of God.

## **FACTS FROM SCRIPTURE**

Now let’s take all of the scripture lessons and compile them into a list. From this list we will extract the actual teachings from the Bible about tithing.

- Tithing was a response to the awe and reverence of God
- The tithe was holy to God
- The tithe could be redeemed
- The animal to tithe could not be predetermined
- The tithe was the Levite’s wages for the services they rendered in the tent of meeting
- The Levites gave a tenth of the tithes they received from the people to the priests
- The tithe had to be eaten only where God chose
- Money was used as a transport mechanism for the tithe and not the tithe itself
- The tithe was used to feed the Levites, fatherless, foreigners, and widows
- The people would be blessed if they obeyed God and provided for those who lacked
- The people presented the tithes to the Levites and were correspondingly blessed
- Nehemiah reinstated the tithe when the people became lax and let the house of God go to ruin
- The more important matters (relative to tithing) of the law were justice, mercy, and faithfulness
- The Pharisees expanded the tithe to include the smallest herbs
- Tithing was practiced long before the law
- There were specific procedures that the people had to follow when presenting their tithes to the Levites
- Great abundance ensued when the people tithed in accordance with God’s instructions (law)
- The lack of tithing by the Hebrew people was due to a hardened heart towards God
- The tithe’s primary purpose was to provide food
- The entire process of tithing taught the people to revere God
- The act of tithing can be used to exalt oneself
- Tithing does not make you righteous

## ***OBSERVATIONS FROM SCRIPTURE***

The following are some observations that were made concerning the tithes. These are things that can be noticed by examining the scriptures or are implied by the scriptures.

- The New Testament does not include instructions to tithe
- The gentiles (non-Jews in this context) were never instructed to tithe
- The Ten Commandments does not include tithing
- Jesus never taught tithing in the Bible
- Paul never taught tithing in the Bible
- Peter and John did not teach tithing in the Bible
- Money was not used as a tithe
- Only produce from the fields and herds were tithed
- The tithe was only used to provide food
- The tithe was never used to fund a project such as building the temple
- The tithe was eaten by the tither (though some of it was given away)

## ***SUMMARY***

Tithing was instituted in the Old Testament law primarily to provide food for the Levites and Priests who had no inheritance from God (God was their inheritance). The tithe was also used to provide food for the orphans, widows, and foreigners. The process of tithing was procedural in that the people had to recite a declaration and give the tithe specifically and exclusively to the Levite. However, the people in the presence of God also ate the tithe. Another important point about the tithe is that money was not tithed. Tithing was not a tax that was given by the people.

I can confidently say that the law of the tithe is not a New Testament Law. The scriptures given above do not support the teaching in the typical church that Christians are supposed to give 10% of their gross income to their local church. That is inconsistent with the tithe of the Old Testament and inconsistent with the practices of the New Testament church. ***Therefore, the Christian is not obligated by God to tithe according to the scriptures that we examined above.***

## ***ARGUMENTS FOR THE TITHE LAW***

There are various arguments that people use to show that the law of tithing is in effect today. These arguments will now be tested against the Biblical evidence that we discovered above.

### ***ROBBING GOD - MALACHI 3:8-10***

One of the greatest arguments for tithing is found in **Malachi 3:8-10**. It is argued that a lack of tithing is robbing God. Is this true? God commanded the Hebrew people to take a tenth of the produce of the land and of their herds and present them to the Levites (or eat them)<sup>3</sup>. Neglecting to do so was at the very least directly disobeying God. However, because of the national condition of the Hebrew people, they became weary of the

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<sup>3</sup> It appears that the tithe changed over a period of time. Historians still don't agree as to how they actually tithed.

things that they were doing by commandment of God. Their hearts grew cold towards God and they began to speak harshly against him. They accused him of not loving them, not being involved with them in the sense that He was doing nothing about restoring them to their once glorious state, and that the evildoers seem to get away with the things that they were doing implying that evil was good.

We must consider something very important here. Malachi states that robbing God involves tithes and offerings. The offering part is defined inaccurately when this scripture is presented as proof that we should tithe. It is stated that the offering is money over and above the tithe. Therefore, we have to give a tithe and an offering in order to be blessed<sup>4</sup>. A look at the Old Testament will show that the offering referred to here was actually the **heave offering**<sup>5</sup>.

Though Malachi reveals that withholding the tithe and offering is robbing God, it does not justify the teaching that the tithe is for today nor does it support the teaching that the tithe is for the local church. The tithe had to be taken to a specific place (tent of meetings), given to a specific person (the Levite), and they had to do and say certain things. We do none of these because we are no longer under these laws. There is no longer a tent of meetings not even for the Jewish people. Real Levites cannot be determined so that we could legally, according to the law, present the tithe. There are no real Levites among us (The Romans destroyed all of the records in AD 70 when they burned Jerusalem). Therefore, since we have no tent of meeting we have no place really, according to the law, to take our tithe. Since we have no known and legal Levite we have no one to present the tithe to. Furthermore, money was not used as the tithe as is commonly taught in churches today.

In conclusion Malachi does not prove that we are supposed to tithe. Malachi shows how far the Hebrew people were from God and how that affected the religious activities and attitudes. Malachi deals with the activities of people under the Old Covenant not the New.

### **FORMER AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY**

It is argued that we must tithe money instead of animals and produce from the land because we do not live in an agricultural society as the Hebrew people did during Old Testament times. On the surface this sounds logical but it doesn't hold up against the facts. This argument tries to show that we must tithe money instead of the animals thus validating the tithing law for New Testament church.

The Old Testament Hebrews did live under an agricultural society. However, there was a monetary system. Their money system was based on silver, gold, and other precious stones. For example, as we saw in our scripture examination section, the people were supposed to exchange their tithe for money (silver), take it to the tent of meetings, exchange the silver for whatever they wanted, and then eat the tithe in the presence of God. If God wanted money then he would have commanded it. In each case that God instructed the people about tithing, He specifically wants food and NOT MONEY.

Therefore, we cannot say that since we do not live in an agricultural society that our tithe will be different. If that were true then we would introduce a rather interesting problem. If God's laws changed based on society then we could alter His laws whenever things (society) changes. God's laws would be different in the industrial society then in the technological society. God's word does not change and we do not have the right to adjust it based on the society or culture around us. Again, the society argument does not justify tithing our money to a local church.

### **PAUL TAUGHT TITHING IN 1 CORINTHIANS 16**

It has been argued that **1 Corinthians 16:2** is referring to tithes. Let me quote it for reference.

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<sup>4</sup> One minister went as far as to say that tithing opens the floodgates and offerings determine how much comes through.

<sup>5</sup> The heave offering (see **Ex. 29:27-28**) was the portion of an offering or sacrifice that was set apart and reserved for Yahweh (God) and for the priests.

***(1 Cor 16:2 NIV) On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.***

Notice that there is no mention of tithing because Paul wasn't talking about tithing. Paul is simply saying that the people should set aside some money so that when he comes there won't have to be an offering taken. Recall that the tithe did not involve money and that Levites were the only ones who could receive the tithe. Paul was from the tribe of Benjamin not Levi (See **Romans 11:1**) so he could not legally accept the tithe from the Jewish people.

Another important point to consider regarding Paul's teaching on giving is found in 2 Corinthians.

***(2 Cor 9:7 NIV) Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.***

Giving that is done reluctantly or by coercion is not pleasing to God. However, consider that none of this has anything to do with tithing just giving. The only time Paul talks about tithing in the Bible is when he was showing how Jesus is of a higher priestly order than any of Abraham's descendants (**Hebrews 7**).

## ***JEWES KNEW TO TITHE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH***

It is argued that the reason that tithing was not taught in the New Testament was because you did not have to tell the Jews to tithe because they were already doing it. However, consider that the New Testament church consisted of non-Jews as well as Jews. Therefore, if tithing was important to the New Testament Church then Jesus would have instituted it into his teaching and the Apostles, including Paul, would have taught the gentiles such an important practice. However, that never happened.

## ***JEWISH FACT REGARDING TITHING***

Jewish people told me that Jews stopped tithing after the Romans in about AD 70 destroyed Jerusalem. They also told me that true Levites could not be accurately determined since the Romans burned Jerusalem, along with all of the lineage records. The law required that the tithe be given to a Levite. Since they didn't know who the Levites were, they couldn't give the tithe. I further asked Jewish people how their Synagogue is funded. I was told that each family pledges a certain amount of money each year by "buying" seats. I was also told that they might give their tithe to charitable organization and to help anyone in need. It is interesting that the Jewish people, who we consider to be blessed, do not practice something that was instituted in their own laws!

The point here is that if tithing were so important for blessings from God then Jesus, Paul, and the other apostles would have instructed the people in it. They didn't. Also, the people who still live under the Old Covenant, namely the Jews<sup>6</sup>, do not practice tithing for very specific reasons yet they are still considered blessed and God's chosen people. Therefore, this argument does not show that tithing is a valid New Testament law that we should follow.

## ***GOD COMMANDED US TO TITHE***

It is argued that the God commanded us to tithe. The commandment to tithe however comes from the Old Testament scriptures. See ***Scripture Examinations on Tithing*** on page 4 for the references to tithing commandments. However, a very interesting problem arises when we try to validate Old Testament Hebrew laws to live by today.

Does the tithing law apply to us today? Consider for a moment all of the laws and rituals that God commanded the Hebrew people to observe. Do we observe these commandments and rituals? No. Why? God commanded

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<sup>6</sup> There are Messianic Jews however.

them right? The reason is that many of the laws given to the Hebrew people are no longer in effect and we therefore do not observe them. If we had to obey all of the law then salvation would be unnecessary and self-righteousness would rule. For example the Ten Commandments state that the people are to observe the Sabbath. Do we observe the Sabbath? No. The New Testament church historically did not observe the Sabbath. Instead they worshipped and had communion on the First day of the week (Sunday<sup>7</sup>). The historical evidence also shows us that tithing did not pass over into the New Testament church. So if there was a commandment from God to tithe then surely the apostles and those of the early church would have done it but they didn't.

A law follower does not have the right to pick which laws he will obey and which he will not obey (refer to **James 2:10**). Does this mean that we do not have to be sensitive and live according to the will of God that is revealed even in the Old Testament law? No. As I said previously, the law transfers to the New Testament by principle. We live according to the Spirit of God since we have direct access to that Spirit through Jesus Christ. The commandment to tithe is therefore seen as a commandment to do what the tithe did, namely provide food for those in need and for ministers that God ordains.

In a strict sense there are no laws or instructions given to us by Jesus Christ that tell us to tithe. However, Jesus had much to say about giving to meet the needs of others, which was the principle behind the tithe. When Jesus gave his Sermon on the Mount, he taught on the principles behind or the heart of the law. He would say something like "You have heard it said of old" and then he would say something like "but I say unto you." He takes the law and teaches us the will or mind of God behind that law. Jesus was revealing the spirit of the law and not the letter of the law. So there is no commandment, instruction, or law telling us to tithe our money to a local church.

## **HONORING GOD**

It is said that we honor God with our tithe or by tithing. Is this consistent with the Bible's teaching? What does it mean to honor God? To honor is to *recognize the value of someone and act accordingly*. It also implies a *high regard for someone (Someone worth bragging about)*. Another word that is sometimes used that implies honor is "*glorify*" which in the verb form means *to give honor to*. You can see that the basis of honoring God must come from the heart. If God is not in high regard then you cannot really honor him. So the first thing we note about honoring God is that we have to have a revelation of who He is and His great "worth" to us. Before we can honor God we must recognize his position and authority in our lives.

There is no scripture that states that we honor God when we tithe. After all, anyone can give a tenth, godly or not. However, the Bible does give us some instruction on honoring God.

***(Proverbs 3:9-10 KJV) "Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: {10} So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine."***

Solomon states that honoring God with our substance (wealth) and with the best part of our increase will result in prosperity. How do we honor God with our wealth and the first fruits of our increase? Is there something that we have to do specifically or in principle? Since honoring God involves the expression of the high regard and respect that we have for Him then it would seem reasonable to say that doing something with our wealth that would demonstrate this high regard is a way of honoring God.

There are many ways that we can honor God since honoring God starts with a heart attitude that leads to an outward expression or activity. Honoring God can take the form of singing, playing an instrument, praise, and even bringing an offering to him.

I think that the greatest way that we can honor God is to obey Him and submit to Him. We obey because we love and we submit because we trust Him with our lives. We honor God with our wealth by using our wealth to demonstrate the high regard and respect we have for God in our lives or to "give God a good reputation." Our abundant giving brings honor to God because the recipients of our gifts realize that God is behind our giving

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<sup>7</sup> Note that Sunday is the first day of the week and Saturday the seventh. We do not observe the Sabbath.

because of our confession. In other words, you make it known that you are an agent for God when you give. The light (Christ in us) that shines (our good works) bring honor to God (See **Matthew 5:16**). The point is that we express the high regard that we have for God by our giving which is a way to let our light shine. This is not "the" way but a way of honoring God.

### **HONORING GOD AND TITHING**

What does honoring God have to do with tithing? In a strict sense it has nothing to do with tithing. However, in a personal sense, it may have much to do with honoring God. As I said earlier, there is no Bible teaching that says that the way to honor God is by tithing. However, a person may decide in their heart that the way they will honor God is to set aside one tenth of their income for whatever God wants to do with it. That is one way to honor God with your increase or wealth. Therefore, honoring God is not directly related to tithing but tithing may be a way that a person uses to express the high regard (honor) they have for God. Honoring God with our giving does not prove that we should tithe because there are many ways to honor God.

### **ARGUMENTS CONCLUSION**

None of the arguments presented above definitely proves that the New Testament church is supposed to tithe from the gross income to the local church.

### **ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE TITHE LAW**

Now I will present some arguments against the tithing law. These arguments attempt to show that the tithing law is not consistent with the teachings in the scriptures for the New Testament church.

### **THE BIBLE DOESN'T TEACH IT**

The greatest argument against the tithe law is that the Bible does not teach us that the New Testament church is supposed to tithe to a local church<sup>8</sup>. Therefore, since the Bible does not teach it then we have no right to teach others that they should tithe.

### **THE EARLY CHURCH HAD NO TITHING SYSTEM**

A guide to the proper operation and practices of the New Testament church can be observed by evaluating the practices of the early New Testament church historically. What did they practice and what did they teach? The early church met on the first day of the week (which is contrary to the Sabbath law). They partook of the Eucharist (communion), sang songs, took a collection for the poor, and socialized. The apostolic fathers never taught tithing nor did the early church practice it. Therefore, our standard for church practices, namely the early church, did not include the practice of tithing. Instead they included the practice of simply meeting the needs of others. Look at the following scriptures.

***(Acts 2:42-45 KJV) "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. {43} And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. {44} And all that believed were together, and had all things common; {45} And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need."***

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<sup>8</sup> Consider that the church structure was much different then it is now. They met in homes and went from house to house having only small gatherings. We have gravitated to mega-buildings with luxurious furnishings.

The Christians of the early church were concerned about two basic things: The Apostle's teaching and meeting each other's needs. It is expedient that the Apostle's teaching did not include tithing because Jesus never taught them to teach the people to tithe.

### **FINANCING THE EARLY CHURCH**

How then was the early church financed? The early church was financed by the free will offering of the people. There was no tithing system instituted at all! As a matter of fact, the early church was financed the same way as the early Israelite society. When God commanded the construction of the tabernacle He did not use tithes but free-will offerings of the people. See **Exodus 35:20-29**. Likewise, the work of the ministry of the early church was financed by free-will offerings. See **Acts 2:44-45; 4:34-35**.

Today the tithes that are received from people in the local churches are not used exclusively for the work of the ministry. Since we have large edifices to maintain, much of the tithes and offerings go toward building maintenance and expenses. Many of the tithes and offerings go towards salaries. Little is given to meet the needs of people or to minister to people as described in **Matthew 25:31-46**. Instead of someone getting the money needed to help purchase a refrigerator, the money is given to a church that squanders it on luxuries. Instead of someone buying a car that they need, they give the money to a church where the pastor drives around in a luxury car. Luxuries are not wrong but having them while teaching the people that they should tithe to sustain these luxuries is wrong<sup>9</sup>.

### ***BREAKING THE LAW***

The tithe is based on an Old Testament law. However, the Bible tells us,

***(James 2:10 NIV) "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it."***

The Christian who insists on keeping the law does not observe the Sabbath and therefore is guilty of the whole law<sup>10</sup>. I use the Sabbath as an example to show that the tithe teaching Christian is trying to live under the law and grace. The Sabbath was observed on the seventh day of the week and there was to be no work on that day. The seventh day of the week is Saturday and how many people rest on Saturday (Sabbath means rest)? We break the law!

How can any of us have the right to pick and choose which laws are applicable and which are not. The only determination as to what we should and shouldn't do comes from the scriptures themselves. In particular we look to the New Testament teachings for specific instructions for the New Testament church.

If someone wants to teach tithing then they must teach all of the other Old Testament laws because tithing was under the Old Testament law. There were specific types of offerings listed in Leviticus, specific types of social practices, etc. What right do we have to say that we are supposed to tithe but not do these other things?

### ***FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY***

We bring honor to God when we are responsible in our finances. What type of testimony would we have among the non-believers if we were always late paying our bills or decided one month not to pay them in order to pay the tithe. The Bible says,

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<sup>9</sup> It is not wrong for a church to be luxurious. That could be a way a pastor wants to honor God. However, the congregation should understand the luxuries so that they can give to support and maintain them if they want. They should not be compelled to give just to support a building.

<sup>10</sup> There are Christians that keep the Sabbath law.

***(1 Peter 2:12 NIV) Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.***

***(Matthew 5:16 NIV) In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.***

How can we show forth the honor of God and the glory and character of God if we are not true to our word? Instead of Christians representing honesty, uprightness, faithfulness, which are of God, we will represent unfaithfulness and untrustworthiness. How are we letting our light shine if we go to the electric company and tell the payment department that we can't pay because we gave our money to a church? That represents a people, namely Christians, who are financially irresponsible and not worthy of trust.

Let's look at another example, suppose you have bills and barely enough money to meet them. Should you pay your tithes to your local church and not pay the money you owe to your creditors and utilities? Some pastors and church people teach that you should neglect your financial responsibilities in order to give to your local church. That teaching is extremely inconsistent with the word of God. The Bible tells us,

***(Romans 13:7-8 NIV) "Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor. {8} Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law."***

Now, if I have X amount of dollars and I forgo my responsibility and obligation to PAY WHAT I OWE because I have decided that I will pay my tithes then I am going directly against scriptural principles. Not just because Paul said it but because of my word of truth and faith that I gave to my debtors. When you take out a loan or agree to use utilities (gas, electric, etc.), you agree to payment terms. You agree with the bank that you will pay a certain amount of dollars a certain day of the month. You agree with your utility company to pay for the utilities that you used the previous month. You have made an agreement that you now will break because you are told to give to the church instead. That is against Bible teaching and against the standards of God. Would Jesus renege on what he promised? Then Christians shouldn't renege on what they promised.

Therefore, any teaching that states that we are to forgo paying what we owe is unscriptural. I must say at this point that you may decide at one time or another to give money to something other than what you should. This could be due to an overpowering conviction that leads to a sacrifice and/or risk or the direct prompting of the Holy Spirit. However, you are aware of the consequences and in the case that God directs you, provisions are already established. Another problem now arises. Can I create a bill so I don't have to pay my tithes or give to the church? This may be considered a giving loophole.

### **GIVING LOOPHOLE BLOCKED**

Remember that tithing was designed to meet the needs of the people. Also consider that we are supposed to give to help each other. Therefore, if I create bills such as credit card bills and loan payments such that I have nothing left to give then I too have violated a Biblical principle. I am acting in selfishness and hoarding what God has given me. Furthermore, I am eating my seed. I used all that I have on myself instead of reserving something to give to help someone and honor God and now I have nothing left to sow.

Now if we look at this concept from the Biblical perspective, we will see that there is no loophole since the Bible teaches that true (Godly) giving is a heart motivated activity. An attempt to keep from giving reveals the true heart of a person. They don't want to give. They want to have all for themselves. Therefore, they will come to poverty according to the teachings of Solomon.

## **TITHING FALLACIES AND TRUTHS**

The following are some teachings concerning tithing that are simply not supported or not revealed in scripture.

## **PASTORS AS LEVITES**

A fallacy in the church is that the pastor stands in the office of the Levite and/or Priest and is therefore justified to receive tithes from the people. This argument is very wrong to the point of going directly against the word of God. There are a few things that show that this argument is invalid: The true determination of Levites and the identity of the priest.

First of all a true Levite comes from the tribe of Levi whose father was Jacob (Israel). It is very unlikely that anyone in America can actually trace his or her lineage back to Jacob in order to justify himself as being a true Levite. There were no other criteria for being a Levite except lineage. Therefore, pastors or anyone for that matter can stand in the office of a Levite because they are not a Levite.

The tithes, as we discussed earlier in this study, were presented to the Levites. If a pastor or minister is not a Levite then they cannot accept the tithes according to the law. As a matter of fact, no one in the entire congregation could accept the tithes from the people legally (according to the Mosaic Law)—NOT EVEN JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF!<sup>11</sup> Therefore, we would have no one to give our tithes to.

Another point is that the pastor or any other minister does not stand in the office of a priest either. The Bible states,

***(Rev 1:5-6 KJV) And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, {6} And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.***

This scripture states that we are a kingdom (kings) of priests. We are priests. We have access to God our father and will minister to him forever as the priests did. In that case, we would be justified to give our tithe to any Christian if giving tithes directly to priests was legal according to the law. However, it was not legal since the tithe was given to the Levite.

## **THE CHURCH IS THE TABERNACLE TO WHICH WE TITHE**

It is taught that we should tithe to our local church because it is a type of tabernacle and the Hebrew people brought their tithes to the tabernacle (tent of meeting). We must consider what the church is and what the tabernacle was. In the Old Testament the tabernacle *was a sacred tent, a portable and provisional sanctuary, where God met His people (Exodus 33:7-10).*

In the strict sense the tabernacle was a tent where God dwelled among his people, who were nomadic at the time. In a less strict sense, and is sometimes used, the tabernacle is referred to as the temple. If we simply consider that it was the place that God dwells then a very interesting question arises. Where does God dwell today? Does he dwell in a building where we have to go and hear from him? The Bible says,

***(1 Cor 6:19 KJV) What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?***

***(1 Cor 3:16 KJV) Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?***

***(2 Cor 6:16 KJV) And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.***

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<sup>11</sup> Jesus was from the tribe of Judah

***(Eph 2:19-21 KJV) Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; {20} And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; {21} In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:***

We are the dwelling place for God. The church buildings are really places where the true church meets. The Bible also tells us,

***(Mat 18:20 KJV) For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.***

Therefore, the church building is not the temple of God and never will be. This argument also does not justify tithing to the local church especially since a paradox is introduced when we consider that we are the temples—Do we tithe to ourselves?

### ***TITHE FROM THE GROSS***

Here is a law within a law. Not only do the religious leaders command us to tithe; we are also told that we must tithe from the gross. This law even sounds logical. This law says that our increase is the gross amount of our income. After all, the government calculates its taxes based on your gross. The fact that you don't see that money is of no consequence. Even if your employer did not withhold the taxes, you would still owe them. Therefore, we are admonished to use the gross pay when we calculate the amount of our tithe.

First of all the tithe law is not applicable to the New Testament church. Therefore, a discussion of tithing from the Net or the gross is foolish. Secondly, there is no conclusive data in scripture that indicates a tithe from net or gross. One thing is certain though. The Hebrew and Jewish people tithed from what they physically had when it was time to tithe.

### ***THE FIRST FRUITS - PAY YOUR TITHES BEFORE BILLS***

It is taught that the tithe is the first fruits of our increase and that we should pay our tithes before we pay our bills. This also implies that if we don't have enough for tithes and bills that we should still pay the tithe first. The first fruits in the Old Testament were different offerings than the tithes. Review **Exodus 23:16-19; 34:22-26; Leviticus 2:12-14**. The following is an excerpt from the Holman Bible Dictionary that defines what the first fruits were.

***FIRSTFRUITS*** *The choice examples of a crop harvested first and dedicated to God. In accordance with Mosaic law, individual Israelites brought to the house of the Lord "the first (that is, "the best") of the firstfruits of thy land" (Ex. 23:19; 34:26), including grain, wine, and oil, which were used--except for the grain (Lev. 2:14-16)--for the support of the priests (Num. 18:12; Deut. 18:4). According to Deuteronomy 26:1-11, the offering was brought in a basket to the sanctuary for presentation. The Book of Proverbs promises prosperity to those who honor the Lord with the firstfruits (Prov. 3:9).*

We see that the offering from the first that the land produced was a way of honoring God, perhaps for blessing them with a harvest, and acknowledging God. Note also that it was not money that God was honored with. This offering was for the support of the priests. The people honored God for the harvest by giving some of the first that the land produced.

We, as good stewards, are obligated to pay what we owe. We don't owe God anything because all belongs to him in the first place. God does not need our money—WE DO. Therefore, God established a system in the Old Testament where the needs of the people would be met. Telling someone that they must pay their tithes first even at the expense of neglecting to pay a bill is not Biblical at all.

Also recall that Paul said that we should give what we have decided to give in our hearts and to give as God

prospers us. This has nothing to do with tithing.

Look at the following scripture.

***(1 Peter 2:11-12 NIV) "Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. {12} Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us."***

Can we do this and still renege on our responsibilities that we agreed upon. No! We would be accused of being liars, thieves, and people who cannot be trusted in agreements. Therefore, it is important that we show forth a good example to the world so that Christians, and thus Christ in their eyes, are blameless and deserving of respect. If a Christian is late paying bills or gives his money to a church in lieu of paying what he owes, then that Christian "gives God a bad name" or dishonors God.

Likewise, if a Christian is on time paying bills and pays what he owes then that Christian will have a good name and bring forth Glory to God. The Bible says,

***(Matthew 5:16 NIV) "In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."***

Our light cannot shine if we have the reputation of being unfaithful and irresponsible people that do not fulfill our obligations and agreements. Unfortunately, Church people have this reputation in the world.

### **GIVE AS DIRECTED BY GOD**

Now I said previously that we should not renege on paying what we owe in order to give to the church or anyone for that matter. However, there may be times when God tells you specifically to give a certain amount of money to your church or someplace else. You know that you don't have the money so you may be reluctant to give. However, in this instance you must trust what God said. Remember, that God provides seed to the sower. So even though you don't have the excess money to give what God commanded and to meet your financial obligations, you will when the time comes. This is why it is so important to be sensitive to God and not rely on religious rules and regulations. This seems to contradict what I said earlier about first fruits. However, consider that it is God who is directing you and you therefore will have provisions for the commanded giving. The point again is to be moved by God's Spirit and not a set of rules and regulations handed down to you by men or by stirred up emotions.

### **SACRIFICES**

Sometimes we will sacrifice things to give to help others or support our church. This does not imply lack on your part but a postponement of desires. For example, I may use the money that I saved for a new suit to give to support a church ministry program or to help someone in need. This doesn't mean that I won't get the suit. It simply means that I have put it off until later so I can help now. God may direct this type of giving or you may just decide to do it because of your own convictions. Sacrifices do not mean lack so we do not have to fear giving even if it means to give up (for now) something we want.

### **CAUSE AND EFFECT**

In an effort to validate the tithe law, many religious leaders develop a cause and effect relationship between a blessing from God and tithing or an unfortunate circumstance and the lack of tithing. Therefore, tithing, which is considered as a commandment of God, brings blessings when done and curses if neglected. People even confess that a specific blessing in their lives (new car, new home, etc.) is a result of their tithing to a church.

God is honored when we exalt him in the presence of others or in our own praise and worship. We confess what God has done by His grace, love, and faithfulness to his word. However, we exalt ourselves when we credit a

blessing to the activity of our tithing (works). Unless the tithe was in direct response to the voice of God or the uncoerced desire of our heart, then the cause of the blessing is not the act of tithing. Obedience brings blessings not our activities (these are called righteousnesses or righteous acts. See **Isaiah 64:6**). Therefore, the cause of our blessings is God. It is through God's love, grace, and faithfulness and our obedience to Him that we're blessed. The only valid cause and effect relationship regarding God is that of obedience that leads to blessings<sup>12</sup>.

## ***THE CONCLUSION***

What is the conclusion of the whole matter regarding the tithe? The conclusion is that we are not required to abide by the tithe law else we would have to abide by all of the law. Christ has fulfilled the law. We therefore live by the Spirit and not by the letter of the law. None of the doctrines or arguments about tithing that we have previously discussed is found in the scriptures that pertain to the New Testament church. We also see that the current tithe teaching is inconsistent with even the Old Testament scriptures that they are founded on. Anyone who persuades people to tithe is trying to mix law and grace. All of the evidence that we have discovered points to one main fact. **God has not commanded or obligated the New Testament Christian to tithe!**

## ***WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?***

What should you do now that you know the truth about tithing? Should you stop tithing to your local church? Not necessarily. The only thing that this study has shown so far is that there is no New Testament law that states that we are required to tithe our income to a local church. This does not imply that there is a commandment that states that we should not tithe to the local church. The decision is totally up to you whether you tithe or not.

You may decide that you want to continue tithing to your local church. You may decide that you want to give some to your local church and some to help others around you. You may decide that you will give your local church whatever you "feel led" to give. However, don't neglect your local church because it has expenses and it meets those expenses by the contributions it obtains from people.

## ***DO NOT NEGLECT YOUR LOCAL CHURCH***

The primary purpose of church meetings is for the fellowship and edification of Christians. Church is very important to the development of a Christian. Therefore, the church organization should not be neglected. Just realize that you are not obligated to tithe. You may give more than 10% or you may be able to give 5%. I believe that however God prospers you is how you should govern your giving. We will talk more about giving in the next section.

Support your local church if you believe in its ministry. A Church should not be focused on plush carpets, exquisite sound systems, grand piano, and other such amenities. If the church is able to afford these things without sacrificing ministry then well. However, the church should never purchase things of luxury at the expense of helping its members. This help may be in the form of education in the word of God (which I believe is of most importance), instruction for practical topics (such as money management, saving for a new home, etc.), or paying to have someone's heat turned back on (with financial counseling if necessary). There may also be drug rehab affiliations or ministries, daycare, Christian education, and other community services. The point is that it takes money to run these things and your church needs your support.

Without your help, the church organization will be very limited in what it can do. Sure we can help people individually. However, a pastor told me that a church could do much more with a consolidated amount than each person could do individually. Again, do not neglect to support your church financially just because you discovered that you don't have to tithe.

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<sup>12</sup> It is important not to equate blessings with riches. Sometimes these blessings may come in the form of increased sensitivity or closeness with God or the accomplishment of His will.

## ***DO NOT NEGLECT THE CARE OF EACH OTHER***

Let me apply a couple of scriptures here.

***(Proverbs 3:27-28 NIV) "Do not withhold good from those who deserve it, when it is in your power to act. {28} Do not say to your neighbor, "Come back later; I'll give it tomorrow"-- when you now have it with you."***

***(James 2:15-16 KJV) "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, {16} And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?"***

Help those when you are in a position to do so. It is not Biblically sound to say that you can't help someone because the money that you would give him or her will be given to your church.

## ***CONSIDER THE HONOR DUE MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL***

Pastors should be supported financially and by other means if they are centered on the word of God. That may mean putting a little extra into the offering plate or slipping them a few bucks when you shake their hands. The Bible says,

***(1 Timothy 5:17-18 NIV) "The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. {18} For the Scripture says, "Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain," and "The worker deserves his wages.""***

Note that Paul stipulates, "Directs the affairs of the church well." Therefore, a minister or pastor who manages the church well and is really concerned about people's souls are worthy of double honor which can be expressed by giving. See also **1 Corinthians 9:13-14**.

## ***CONTINUE TO TITHE***

Some people may decide that they want to continue to tithe even though they are liberated from the tithe law. You may commit 10% of your income to be kept for use in ministry. You may use it to help someone, support an evangelist, or give to support your church. So it is OK to continue to tithe if you want to. Just realize that you are not giving because of compulsion or obligation. You are tithing because you really want to help. Note also that reserving a tithe of your income or any amount of money does not have to be exclusively given to the local church. Your tithe or financial reserve is sacred in that you have put it aside for the sake of ministry (meeting the needs of others).

Also consider that the tithe in the Old Testament did not originate from the Law. Tithing was practiced long before God instituted it in the Law. Therefore, as some suggest, if tithing was good enough during the Old Covenant, it is good enough for the New Covenant. However, we are not bound by a law to tithe. However, the principle of tithing is still in effect because it dealt with meeting the needs of others.

## **PART 2 - GIVING**

Now let's discuss the act of giving in the life of a Christian who is free from the tithe law. What does it mean to be a giver and what does the Bible teach about giving as opposed to tithing. I will attempt to shed some light on this topic now.

### **KEY SCRIPTURES**

There are more than 900 scriptures regarding giving in the Bible. Therefore, I will only evaluate some key scriptures to illustrate Biblical giving. Most of the scriptures I will use are from the New Testament since our giving today is applicable for the New Testament church.

#### ***PROVERBS 11:22-26 – GIVING INDUCES BLESSINGS***

Solomon says that a person who gives freely and does not hoard what he has will be prosperous. This is consistent with **Luke 6:38** in the way Solomon presents it as a natural reciprocation among people. A person who withholds what he has to give will be cursed. Note that the language of these verses indicates that it is other people who will manifest your blessings but that God works through them.

#### **SCRIPTURE LESSON**

Giving generously to people will produce a reciprocate activity from others. We cannot rule out that God is behind even the activities of the people manifesting your blessing because God works through people for people. In general giving induces prosperity.

#### ***PROVERBS 28:27 – GIVING TO THE POOR***

Solomon says that the one who gives to the poor will lack nothing. However, the person that turns his back on the poor (when they are able to help) will be cursed much. See also **Proverbs 19:17; 22:9; Deuteronomy 15:7-8; Psalm 41:4; 112:5-7; Hebrews 13:16**.

#### **SCRIPTURE LESSON**

Giving to the poor (those in need) promotes provision for yourself.

#### ***MATTHEW 5:42 – GIVE TO THE ONE WHO ASKS***

Jesus teaches the people to give to the person who asks and wants to borrow something. Don't turn them away.

#### ***MATTHEW 10:8 – FREELY RECEIVE, FREELY GIVE***

Jesus tells his disciples to give freely as they have received freely. The focus here is not on monetary gifts but on what they learned from Jesus. Note the context of healing, cleansing, and casting out demons as opposed to giving money. As Jesus poured his teaching and authority into them, they were to in turn pour Jesus' word and the will of God into and onto others.

#### **SCRIPTURE LESSON**

This scripture implies that the disciples, as well as we, are to be channels for God. As we learn and are edified, we should produce the same in others. As we receive we give.

### ***LUKE 6:30 – GIVE TO THOSE WHO ASK***

The following is from the Wesley's Commentary: *Give to every one-Friend or enemy, what thou canst spare, and he really wants: and of him that taketh away thy goods-By borrowing, if he be insolvent, ask them not again (Mt 5:42).*

I included this commentary because it is consistent with other scriptures in the Bible pertaining to giving. First there is the component of having something to give and secondly there is the component of having the desire to give.

#### SCRIPTURE LESSON

Again we see the teaching to be free to give to those who are in need when we have something to give.

### ***LUKE 6:38 – GIVE AND RECEIVE***

Read **Luke 6:13-38** for a clearer picture of this scripture. This appears to be the law of reciprocity<sup>13</sup> among humans. That is, if I am generous with people then people tend to be generous with me. This verse does not necessarily deal exclusively with finances. Consider that Jesus' main focus is the love of one's enemy. Therefore, we can say that if one gives much love then one will receive much love. If one forgives much then one will be forgiven much. If one judges much then one will be judged much and so on. We must also consider that Jesus was talking to his disciples and that these words could have been specific for the mission he had for them. Consider **Luke 16:1-9** (How the people would return kindness for the steward for the good deed he did for them).

Also note that Jesus said men will give into your bosom. The words here are clear. If we give to others then others will tend to give to us abundantly. This, however, is typical human nature. We all tend to love those who love us, be nice to those who are nice to us. Therefore, people will tend to give to you as you give to them. I'm sure you know this to be true from everyday experiences with people.

#### SCRIPTURE LESSON

This scripture appears to reveal the law of reciprocity. That is, kindness brings about kindness and the like.

### ***LUKE 12:33 – FREE TO GIVE TO THE POOR***

See **Matthew 6** for a parallel reference. Jesus tells his disciples to sell their possessions and give to the poor. Doing so will establish treasure in heaven. He uses the term purse to imply that there will always be provisions for them. This scripture must be taken in its proper context with the rest of the chapter. It is not merely the act of giving to the poor that results in treasure in heaven. It begins with a trust in God and seeking after his kingdom. You don't worry about your life because of your trust and confidence in God. You know that God will meet your needs. Therefore, you are free to give to the poor without worrying about possibly needing that money later.

#### SCRIPTURE LESSON

Giving freely and relinquishing the bonds of possessions occurs if there is a true trust in God and the dwelling of the love of God. Also, the results of this trust in God are to give and that entire process results in treasure (wealth) in heaven.

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<sup>13</sup> People tend to reciprocate what you do for them. If you give a gift to someone then they feel a sense of duty to give you a gift. If you are kind to someone then they tend to be kind (or kinder) to you.

**LUKE 19:5-8**

It is evident that Zacchaeus held Jesus in high regard since he climbed a tree just to see him. Jesus told him that he had to go to his house. Zacchaeus' life was so changed that he said that he would give a half of his possessions to the poor and he would restore four times to anyone he had cheated.

SCRIPTURE LESSON

The effect of Christ on Zacchaeus' life was to give.

**ACTS 2:44-45; 4:34-35 – GIVING IN THE EARLY CHURCH**

Here we see that the wealthy (or those who had abundance) sold their lands and possessions and gave them to the apostles to be distributed to those who had need. Christianity began socially as a communal lifestyle to meet the needs of Christians who were in need.

*A Jew that became a Christian while in Jerusalem would most likely be ostracized socially and economically by the Hebrew nation. If it were not for the generosity of wealthy believers such as Barnabas (Acts 4:36) many Jewish believers would have starved. As Christianity spread outside of Jerusalem, the effects of being ostracized were much less because the Jewish Christians began dealing with non-Jews.<sup>14</sup>*

SCRIPTURE LESSON

The early Christians<sup>15</sup> in Jerusalem were on one accord. They (those who were able) sold some of their properties and possessions so that there would be something to give those who had need.

**ACTS 20:33-35 – WORK, EARN, GIVE**

Paul reminds the people that he worked with his own hands to supply his own needs. As an example we can help the weak when we earn wages from our labor.

SCRIPTURE LESSON

The wages or increase that we earn from our labor can be used to help the weak. Also note that though Paul was an apostle traveling to spread the Gospel, he worked like any other man to earn wages to meet his needs. This doesn't mean that he was unworthy of gifts but he didn't take those gifts for granted.

**ROMANS 12:20-21 – GIVING TO ENEMIES**

Paul instructs the Romans to give even to those who are considered enemies. If they are hungry or need clothes then supply it for them. By doing this you may win them over by making them feel shame for treating you so badly.

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Consistent with Jesus teaching of loving our enemies (**Matthew 5:44**), we are to meet their needs as well. As a matter of fact, meeting the needs of even our enemies is an expression of the love of God that we have on the inside. This is a way of overcoming evil with good.

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<sup>14</sup> From the Believer's Study Bible's commentary

<sup>15</sup> The first Christians consisted of people living in Jerusalem.

## ***2 CORINTHIANS 9:6-8 – GIVE FROM THE HEART***

Here Paul instructs the Corinthians to give what they had decided to give in their heart and not out of compulsion or obligation. He also tells them that if they sow sparingly then they will reap sparingly. Even in giving to others, God will still make all grace abound so that you will not lack.

### SCRIPTURE LESSON

Give from the heart and not from obligation. God will still provide for you and you do not have to feel a sense of lack when you give. The more we sow the more we will reap.

## ***EPHESIANS 4:28 – WORK, EARN, AND GIVE***

Paul tells the Ephesians to steal no more and to work so that they will be in a position to give to those who have need.

### SCRIPTURE LESSON

Use some of what we earn to help those in need. Earn our money honestly.

## ***JAMES 2:15:16 – HELPING OTHERS IN NEED***

An example of the fruits or activities of faith (the faith of salvation) is to give to those who are in need when you are able to do so. Therefore, giving is an expression of Christian faith (salvation) because faith without corresponding actions is dead.

### SCRIPTURE LESSON

Giving to meet someone's physical need is an expression of **the faith**.

## ***FACTS FROM SCRIPTURE***

Now let us compile all of the scripture lessons that we have gained thus far about giving.

- Giving to meet someone's physical needs is an expression or manifestation of faith (salvation)
- Use some of our wages to help others in need
- Giving generously to people will induce a reciprocation activity. Giving induces blessings via other people's activities prompted by God
- God is pleased when we give from the heart and not out of obligation
- God will provide for you even when you give to help others
- What you reap is determined by what and how much you sow
- Give to meet the needs of even your enemies and perhaps win them over with love
- The effects of Christ may result in giving and justice as with Zacchaeus
- Giving freely results when we truly trust God and it causes treasures to be stored up in heaven
- Give freely to those in need

- One of the effects of a heavenly oriented heart is giving
- We are channels for God. As we receive we should give
- Give to those who ask if it is within your power to do so
- Giving to the poor promotes provision for ourselves
- As we are prompted by God to give to meet other's needs the same happens for us
- The early Christians gave to meet the needs of each other

## **SUMMARY**

We saw that giving was induced by a loving heart and was one of the manifestations of the Spirit of God within. We also saw that giving to others promoted a reciprocation effect whereas people will tend to give to you when you give to them. Giving was primarily used to meet the needs of those who lacked. God loves a cheerful giver: One who gives freely and not under compulsion or obligation.

Giving is a way of expressing the Christian faith and a way of sowing seed into someone else. **Most of all, I believe from the evidence above, that giving is a natural expression of the Spirit of God that dwells within us.**

## **DISCUSSIONS ON GIVING**

Let's discuss a few topics that have to do with giving to tie up some loose ends.

### **THE LOVE OF GOD**

*(John 3:16 KJV) For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

God loved us so much that, even in our sinful nature, he gave his son that we may be reconciled to Him. The Bible teaches us without doubt that God is love (1 John 4:8) and is motivated by love. This is why John could say,

*(1 John 4:8 NIV) Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.*

God gave us the opportunity for life because of love. We give to help others or support a church because we love people. We love the world as God loves the world and we do what we can to get the people of the world to come to Christ. Again this is motivated by love and not because it is our JOB to evangelize the world.

Therefore, any discussion on giving must include a discussion on the love of God else we fall to religious rituals and traditions. I give because I love as God gave because he loves. I give because I love my neighbor and I express that love through deeds, in this case giving. Therefore, giving with any other motive is not true Godly giving.

### **NATURAL RESPONSE**

The act of giving out compassion is a natural phenomenon with humans. For example, when a natural disaster strikes, such as an earthquake, people from all over the country give time, assistance, and money to help the victims. Therefore, we don't really need to be taught to give. We only need something that is worthy of our gift. A parent will sacrifice much for the sake of the child. I believe that we all have these types of convictions inside of

us waiting to be expressed. We just need a reason or a focal point of these convictions.

### ***THE SELFISH MODE***

***(James 4:2-3 KJV) "Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. {3} Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts."***

The concept of tithing and giving to meet the needs of others can become a self-righteous trap if we are not careful. We do not give to get. Our giving should be a separate mode of operation than our expecting to receive. I give because I want to help others. I expect to receive from God because of my knowledge of his word in meeting my needs and because of the seeds that I have sown. My confidence in him is supported by my obedience and past experiences and not specifically to my past giving. That is, I don't give to ensure that I will receive. I give to ensure that someone else will receive or that some need is met. You are trusting in your act of giving if you give to ensure that you will receive at a later date. That philosophy is true to religion and not godliness. Trust in God. Know that you are obeying him but don't trust in your giving. Therefore, don't believe that your act of tithing or giving will guarantee your needs are met. Your needs being met are guaranteed in the word of God - not by your acts.

### ***GIVING – THE HIGHER ORDER***

**The Higher order is love.** One way of expressing this love, as God did with the world (**John 3:16**) is in giving. We give more than just money though we tend to stress monetary gifts. We give of our time, our energies, experiences, resources, as well as money. We give to help others in their times of need. We give because we want to express our appreciation, love, compassion, and concern for another. We give because we love. Abel gave a righteous gift yet there was no law requiring him to give. I have also found that giving is a natural thing that we do. We tend to show appreciation by a gift when someone does something for us. Giving is indeed a very natural thing.

Giving to a church is only a specific destination of our giving. We give to a church because we believe in the ministry of that church (assuming we are not giving out of compulsion). We want to support that church because we agree and want to take part in what it is doing to meet the ministry needs of the people. We give from a heart decision and not because we are compelled to give. We give to the church organization to help consolidate the efforts of preaching the Gospel to the unsaved and to edify those who are of the faith.

We have not been commanded to follow the Old Testament law concerning giving, offerings, and sacrifices. However, we have a law of love that we must obey. Giving therefore is a higher order to the law since it is part of the spirit of the law that Christ taught. We follow the spirit of the law instead of the letter of the law. We give from the heart instead of by compulsion or commandment. Giving (that is, responding to the Spirit of God within) is indeed the higher order.

## **PART 3 - SOWING AND REAPING**

Now let us discuss the concept of sowing and reaping. We had previously mentioned that there is a fundamental difference between sowing and reaping and giving. Now let us look more closely at sowing and reaping to enhance these differences for the sake of our understanding.

### **DEFINITIONS**

First let's examine the definitions of sowing and reaping so that we can put what we learn in proper perspective.

#### **SOWING DEFINED**

Sowing in the Bible describes the process of *scattering seed on the ground (field) for growing*. By implication it could mean *to propagate or disseminate (Ex. sow discord)*.

#### **REAPING DEFINED**

The word "reap" means to *cut down using a sickle*. Reaping in the Bible describes harvesting in general terms. The word harvest means to *gather a crop*. It also meant to *obtain as a result of effort, to obtain a return or reward*.

#### **HARVESTING DEFINED**

Harvesting is the act or process of gathering a crop. By implication it is the consequence or result of an action.

#### **THE PROCESS**

A farmer would scatter his seed in his field so that the seeds would produce the respective fruit (and more seeds). After a time the crop would be reaped and then harvested.

### **KEY SCRIPTURES**

#### **MATTHEW 13:3, MARK 4:6, LUKE 8:5 – THE SOWER AND THE SEED**

This is the beginning of the parable of the sower and the seed. The farmer scattered his seed in his field. We learn from Mark's gospel that the seed is the word of God and the field is the world. Therefore, the word of God is sown in the world to produce fruit.

#### **SCRIPTURE LESSON**

The word of God is sown in the Earth producing various levels of fruit.

#### **MATTHEW 13:27 – THE WHEAT AND THE TARES (WEEDS)**

Again we see the reference to a person scattering seed in a field (sowing). We also note that there were other seeds that were scattered along with the wheat and they were producing weeds.

#### **SCRIPTURE LESSON**

Bad seeds can be sown along with the good seed producing undesirable fruit. However, God knows the difference between what his seed produces and what the undesirable seed produces. By implication we see that

a seed will grow whether it is good (desirable) or bad (undesirable).

### **JOHN 4:37-38 – HARVESTING SOULS**

Jesus is talking to his disciples about harvesting souls to the Kingdom of God. We see that the harvester is not necessarily the sower.

#### SCRIPTURE LESSON

Souls can be harvested. Also, the harvester may not be the one who sowed.

### **ROMANS 6:21-22 (NIV) – REAPING FROM PAST ACTIVITIES**

Paul is referring to the results of the sins that were committed in the past.

#### SCRIPTURE LESSON

We experience the consequences of past activities and actions.

### **1 CORINTHIANS 9:11 – MINISTER’S RIGHT TO REAP**

Paul is discussing the rights of ministers of the Gospel to receive compensation for their work. Here we have a link between spiritual seeds (the word of God) and the right to material compensation. Paul does not seem to imply that the spiritual seed produced the materials. Rather, he appears to say that he has a right to be supported by those whom he preached to.

#### SCRIPTURE LESSON

Ministers have a right to receive material items from the people that they preached to.

### **2 CORINTHIANS 9:6 – SOWING/REAPING SPIRITUAL LAW**

Paul states that your reaping will be dependent on your sowing. The more you sow, the more you will reap so that you will have even more to sow. This appears to be a spiritual principle for God to supply what you need and to bless you with abundance. Other insights to this principle are:

***(Prov 11:24-25 NIV) One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. {25} A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.***

***(Prov 19:17 NIV) He who is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will reward him for what he has done.***

See also **Luke 6:38**.

*“Giving is like sowing: you reap in proportion to what you sow. Giving must be methodical and cheerful. If you give in that way, God will make sure you have enough for your own needs and enough to give away, as the Psalmist says. Yes, if you sow benevolence, God will keep on increasing the amount you have to sow. And your enrichment, spiritual as well as material, will result in greater*

## PART 3 – SOWING AND REAPING

*generosity, and also in much thanksgiving to God from those who receive your gift, for giving does not only bring help to the saints, but causes God to be glorified by them.*<sup>16</sup>

The key point here is that God will increase what is available to give as long as you give. Your increase will be in proportion to what you have given (sown).

### THESE SCRIPTURES REVEAL THE SPIRITUAL LAW OF SOWING AND REAPING

#### VALID SOWING

The fact that God will ensure that your needs are met and that you will have plenty to give away brings up an interesting question about sowing. What is proper sowing? That is, what gifts are considered sowing seed that will guarantee provisions from God? According to the scriptures that we have examined regarding this principle, it is clear that meeting someone's need is considered valid sowing. For example, a birthday present or a Christmas present in itself is not sowing seed. However, giving someone clothes or money for clothes when they need it is considered valid sowing. Additionally, valid sowing must be accompanied by proper motive. Sowing to get is not valid sowing. Sowing to help is valid sowing. Sow to bless and then you will receive. Don't sow to receive thinking you will be blessed. God's law doesn't seem to work that way.

#### SOWING METHOD

Paul indicates that sowing or giving must be done with purpose. We have to decide what we want to give and we must do it cheerfully. Giving out of compulsion or obligation is not pleasing to God and I would dare say that it does not produce a harvest according to the sowing and reaping principle.

My giving is from the heart and is to meet the needs of someone, to support my church because I believe in its ministry or at the commandment of God for a specific purpose. Sowing this way will produce provisions for me in addition to more that are available to give away. The proper method of sowing is to sow from the motivations of your godly heart and to do so willingly and cheerfully.

#### CONSEQUENCES OF THIS PRINCIPLE

You do not have to be afraid to give if you operate in this principle. Remember that your giving is done from that which you are able to give and not necessarily sacrificially (though you may sacrifice to give sometimes). However, since by faith you know that God is true to His word, you do not have to worry about lack or be afraid to give if you decide to give to help someone. The Bible says,

***(Proverbs 19:17 NIV) He who is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will reward him for what he has done.***

The law of sowing and reaping frees us to use our resources to help others without the anxiety of a lack of provisions for future needs. The Bible says,

***(Phil 4:6 NIV) Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.***

#### SCRIPTURE LESSON

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<sup>16</sup> The International Bible Commentary, Marshall Pickering/Zondervan

Sowing and reaping is a spiritual law. God will ensure that your needs are met and that you have plenty to give to others if you sow.

### ***GALATIANS 6:7-9 – HARVEST FROM MOTIVE OF SEED SOWN***

Whatever you put out is what will be produced for you. If you sow to please the sinful nature then you will reap destruction. If you sow to please the Spirit then you will reap life. We can see here a component of motive affecting the harvest. For example, suppose Johnny gave Miss Smith some money to help her buy groceries and that his gift was to create an opportunity to get close to her for perhaps a sexual relationship. This is sowing to the flesh even though the object of the sowing was a gift of money. What he really sowed was manipulation and deceit. Therefore, Johnny cannot say that because he helped Miss Smith that God will bless him. Motive is very important and does affect the harvest reaped because motive is crucial in identifying the true seed.

#### **SCRIPTURE LESSON**

The motive of the giving is also a determinant of what is harvested. Whatever we sow is what we will reap. It becomes important to check our motive to ensure that we are sowing the seeds that we think we are sowing or want to sow.

### ***PHILIPPIANS 4:19 – THE CHURCH THAT SOWS***

Note that Paul is addressing a church and not a just any group of people, though this truth applies to individuals as well. If you read from verse 12 you will see that the church at Philippi gave to support Paul's missionary endeavors. So Paul told the church that God would meet all their needs because they met his needs. This is another example of sowing and reaping in action.

#### **SCRIPTURE LESSON**

Even a church can sow to meet the needs of another minister and reap to have its needs met. We also see that a church that gives to the support of a missionary will have its needs met. This helps to show the importance of missionaries and the importance of supporting them.

### ***JAMES 3:18 -- PEACEMAKERS***

Those people who make peace (agreement, concord), that sow peaceably will produce a harvest of righteousness. That is, the seeds that they sow will produce fruit (harvest) that is in right standing and according to the will of God.

#### **SCRIPTURE LESSON**

Peacemakers sow seeds that produce a harvest (fruits) of righteousness.

### ***PROVERBS 11:18 – SOWING RIGHTEOUSNESS***

The word righteousness in this verse is the Hebrew word *tsedaqah* (tsed-aw-kaw') and means *rightness, justice, moral (virtue) or figuratively prosperity*. To sow righteousness is to sow that which is in right standing with God. Sowing righteousness will produce a reward or harvest.

#### **SCRIPTURE LESSON**

Scattering righteousness ensures a just reward (harvest).

## ***PROVERBS 22:8 – SOWING WICKEDNESS***

This is an application of the sowing and reaping principle. Whatever you sow is what you will reap. If you sow wickedness then you will reap trouble.

### **SCRIPTURE LESSON**

Sowing wickedness will produce wicked fruit and seed.

## **FACTS FROM SCRIPTURE**

The following is a compilation of the facts from the scriptures that we have examined above.

- The word of God is sown in the Earth and produces various levels of fruit
- Bad seed can be sown along with good seed and grow together
- Souls are also harvested (gathered) into the Kingdom of God
- It is possible to reap where you have not sown
- Ministers have a right to reap materially after sowing spiritually
- Sowing and reaping is a spiritual law
- Motive is a factor in what is produced when you sow
- Motive identifies what is really sown
- Peacemakers sow seed that produce a harvest of righteousness
- Sowing righteousness will produce a reward
- Sowing wickedness will produce wicked fruit
- Churches can sow and then reap as well as individuals

## **SUMMARY**

Sowing and reaping is a spiritual law that God uses to provide for people. Giving is a form of sowing. The harvest that is desired can be obtained by sowing the proper seeds along with the proper motives. What is sown is not always the object of giving.

We have also seen from the scriptures that God will meet our needs, including churches, if we sow to help others. The more we sow the more we will reap. However, we should not let a desired result be the motivation for sowing. In that case there is no reward because it would be unrighteous (not right with God). See **James 4:2-3**.

## **PART 4 - PRACTICAL APPLICATION**

Thus far we have discussed tithing, giving, sowing and reaping. Now let's use the knowledge gained and evaluate how these things operate in our lives and how people measure and use these things. Why do people tithe? Why do we give? What should we sow and how?

### **GIVING AND SOWING**

What is the difference between giving and sowing? It helps me to think of giving as the medium by which the content of my heart is expressed. I will give you money but that is not necessarily sowing money. If I take that same money and invest it then that is sowing money (into myself). I understand the difference to be the following:

***Sowing involves a seed that will produce a crop to be harvested. Giving is a motivated activity that may be used for sowing.***

Again we use the act of giving to sow seeds of the heart. The seeds of the heart include compassion, love, care, kindness, peace, and more. We express these heart attributes by giving comfort, good words, of ourselves, money, objects, etc. We sow love, compassion and benevolence by giving time, money, and encouraging words. Do you see the difference?

Note that I cannot say that the above description is a definite Biblical explanation. However, it helps me to understand the difference so that I am moved into the realm of a good steward by being conscious of what and where I sow and give.

### **WHERE TO GIVE**

There are no rules or formulas as to where to give except that you listen to the Holy Spirit for special instructions. Otherwise, give when you can and when it is your will to give. Don't just wait until you have extra money or time to give. Include giving in your plans and budget so that you will have to give when the time comes. I will now present to you some ideas where you can give.

### **GIVE TO YOURSELF**

At first this sounds very selfish but really it is not. I am not suggesting that you give only to yourself but that in all of your giving be sure to give to yourself. I believe that this is important because it will help prevent contempt for giving to arise. After a while you may begin to feel neglected because you keep helping others but you always are in lack. So remember to give to yourself. How can you do this?

***(Psalms 37:3-4 NIV) "Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. {4} Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart."***

This is a conditional promise from God. First we must trust Him and DO GOOD. Then we can dwell where we are (where God directs us). Also when we delight in the Lord, He will give us the desires of our heart. Do not give God's gifts away to others when He fulfills the desires of your heart. For example, God may bless us with \$500 and the first thing we start thinking about is giving it away to help someone or to give it to the church for the building fund. That is good but God gave the money to you and for you. Sure you may want to help but you don't have to give it all away. Let God bless you sometimes! Sometimes you must receive!

### **GIVE TO YOUR FAMILY (HOUSEHOLD)**

We said earlier in this study that giving is a way of sowing seed. We also said that giving is a medium by which we give love or benevolence. That is, we show or express what's in our heart by giving a gift or something of that nature. **Don't neglect your family!** Have you contributed to the plush carpets at your church and your own son has run down shoes? Be sure to take care of your family by sowing into them. Show your love for them by giving

to meet their needs and their desires (as much as you are able). What you desire to come from your family for good must first be sown into it.

## ***GIVE TO YOUR PARENTS***

Enough cannot be said about giving to your parents. The Bible tells us to honor our mother and father (**Exodus 20:12, Deuteronomy 5:15**). Look also at the following scripture. What do you think would happen if a farmer kept giving away seed that was given to him? He would find that after a while he would have no crop and therefore no harvest. Why? He never sowed seeds for himself so that he would have a crop to harvest. However, he may find that his neighbor has a harvest and may even become upset that he is in lack and his neighbor prospers. This is the time when people may start to question or blame God for being in lack. Learn to use what God gives you wisely and you will find that God has provided for you on numerous occasions but you gave it away.

***(Matthew 15:3-6 NIV) "Jesus replied, "And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? {4} For God said, 'Honor your father and mother' and 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.' {5} But you say that if a man says to his father or mother, 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is a gift devoted to God,' {6} he is not to 'honor his father ' with it. Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition."***

Jesus plainly reveals that it is wrong to neglect your father and mother to say that you are going to give to God. Since it is God's will that we honor our mother and father, it would not be wrong to give to them instead of the church. Never neglect your parents! Therefore, when we have opportunity we should always give to help our parents and to give them gifts. We honor them by giving in the same way we honor God by giving.

I think one of the greatest ways to honor our parents is to provide for them. There will come a time when they cannot work and earn a living. There will come a time when they don't want to go to work but relax. There will come a time when they can't do work around the house like they used to. They will simply need help and the children should be the first avenue for this help in my opinion. So never neglect your parents for the sake of the church or others. That is the will of God.

## ***GIVE TO THOSE IN NEED***

Of course we should give to help others. This principle is taught in the Bible. Even God instituted meeting the needs of the less fortunate by the tithes and harvesting guidelines (see **Leviticus 19:9-10**). Give to help others when it is in your power to do so. Provision will not fall from heaven. Money will not grow on trees. If someone needs money then they will have to acquire it as wages, harvest, or gift.

## ***GIVING TO YOUR CHURCH***

I felt that giving to the church deserves special attention. It is a good thing to support the activities of your church by financial contributions. Your church is or should be a consolidation of ministries. That is, the church acts as a centralized base for the coordination of various ministries for the sake of preaching the word of God, meeting the needs of the community, and edification of the saints. Therefore, if you believe in what your church is doing and want to support it then it is quite OK to contribute financially to support it or fund it. Basically when you give to your church you are funding its activities and thus helping people.

There must be a distinction between the needs of an organization and the needs of people. The needs of people well outweigh the needs of an organization because people make up the organization. The expenses of a church consist of utilities (water, gas, electric), insurance, salaries, and funds for other things such as carpets and renovations. These are valid expenses for an organization that is performing a service for the community. However, the Bible does not make a point that we are to give for these things. The Bible teaches us to meet the needs of people. Giving to purchase new carpets, windows, etc. is not meeting the needs of the people.

## TREASURES IN HEAVEN

Sometimes it is said in church that you can determine where a person's heart is by examining their checkbook. I do not agree with this dogma. Look at the following scripture.

***(Matthew 6:19-21 NIV) ""Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. {20} But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. {21} For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."***

Somehow we have been taught that laying up treasures in heaven means to give to the church. This is not what Jesus was referring to in this passage of scripture. As a matter of fact it is very necessary to read the entire chapter. Jesus was dealing with matters of the heart at this stage of his teaching. He had talked about properly motivated praying, giving and fasting. Now he says don't be earthly minded but spiritually minded concerning finances in particular. Your treasures are those things that are valuable to you. Do you consider the things of heaven valuable to you or those things of this earth? Jesus was commenting on the value of the things of God such as properly helping others and the like.

Properly exercising God's spiritual law of sowing and reaping will result in treasures that will always make provisions available for you which cannot be taken away from you. Therefore Jesus said in verse **21** that if your valuables are Earthly then you will be Earthly but if your valuables are heavenly then you will be heavenly motivated.

## BLESSING FROM GOD

Another fallacy is that God will bless us if we give to the church. This is true in only two respects: That we give according to what we decided and do so cheerfully or that we give because God told us to. God may want your church to purchase a new van so that a ministry team can travel to spread the Gospel. Funding such a project is not only good but God may put it on your heart to give a certain amount of money towards it. The blessing comes from obedience and not by the act of giving to a church. If God said it then we have to do it and are blessed because of it (our obedience). However, the simple act of giving to the church does not guarantee blessings. A criminal can give what he has stolen and be blessed for it if that were true.

## **WHERE TO SOW**

Where should you sow your money, time, and resources? Some places that you may sow are yourself, others, ministry, and your church. Remember that you expect a crop when you sow. What crops would you expect if you sow to yourself, others, ministry, and church. One thing that they all have in common is that they involve people who can be edified by the word of God.

## **SOWING INTO YOURSELF**

Sowing into yourself involves activities that will edify you directly such as building your own Bible study library, starting a business, additional education, and even monetary investments. The point here is that you pursue those things that will build you up in all areas of your life. For example, a husband may sow into his marriage by learning how to have a successful marriage, etc. The fruit of his actions will result in a better marriage. The same applies to all areas of your life whether scholastic, occupational, leisure, or spiritual. Another aspect is that a better you will be more useful for the edifying of others.

Neglecting to sow into yourself may eventually render you useless for edifying others. For example, a pastor who neglects to sow into himself will eventually lose the fresh revelation that is necessary to preach an appropriate message to the people because he has not been studying diligently for personal edification in the word of God. Also a pastor who does not sow into himself may soon find that his life is falling apart, which will eventually affect his family and then his ministry. So we see again that sowing into yourself is essential for your continued

edification in all areas of your life and for the ability to edify others.

### ***SOWING INTO OTHERS***

You can sow into others by helping others so that they can have an increase. For example you can sow into someone by helping him or her purchase a new suit for their new job, helping them with tuition for school, or giving them Bible study resources. You can also sow into someone's life in the same way you could sow into your life. That is, you could invest money in their name; give them assistance for occupational advancement, etc. The point is that you sow into others so that others will reap a harvest. Both of you will receive a harvest when you sow into someone else though the harvest is quite different for both. They will receive a harvest from the seed that was sown FOR THEM. You will receive a harvest for the seed that you sowed into them (kindness, concern, benevolence, etc.).

### ***SOWING INTO MINISTRY***

Sowing into ministry involves giving time and other resources to further the Gospel of Jesus Christ and/or to edify the saints with the word of God. You can give to support a ministry (an evangelist or missionary for example) or you can give to support your church's ministries.

Expect a return when you sow. If you don't expect a return or results then you are wasting your seed. Therefore, how can we effectively sow into ministry? We can sow into ministry by funding a ministry project that directly ministers to people. For example, contributing to help purchase a church van so that a ministry team can go out and evangelize is a way of sowing into ministry. Giving for a building fund or the like is not (though these are valid purposes to give to your church). One can loosely say that if you sow to help your church buy new carpets then you will have carpets in your home when you need it. However, scripture does not substantiate that teaching nor do we see any examples of such in the Bible.

When you sow into ministry you expect to produce a crop of people becoming born again and people becoming built up by the word of God. You then have a right to any rewards or benefits associated with this. However, the real reward is knowing that someone's life has been saved by the blood of Christ through the Gospel preached or that a Christian has been further edified by the word of God. I must add that sowing into ministry may not mean sowing to your church exclusively. Ministry is ministry whether it is through your church, individual Christians or Christian organizations.

### ***HAVE A NEED-PLANT A SEED***

It is said quite often in churches that if you have a need you should plant a seed. On the surface this appears to be biblical and it appears to be consistent with the doctrine of sowing and reaping. However, it is neither of these. The "have a need-plant a seed" teaching is contrary to biblical teaching and consistent with religion and self-righteousness. Let me show you how I come to this conclusion. To believe that your needs are met by an activity on your part implies that you do not depend on God. Instead you trust the results of your own activity—your own self-righteousness. This teaching is wrong to say the least. Anyone who practices this is inadvertently placing their trust in themselves and not God.

This principle also applies to the teaching of tithing. It is taught that tithing will guarantee that your needs are met. This implies that anyone who gives a tenth of his or her earnings will be blessed and thus promoting self-righteousness. Our actions do not bless us. We are blessed because of love, trust, and obedience to God.

***Have a need—Plant a Seed is not biblical***

## **PART 5 – REVIEW**

We have covered tithing, giving, sowing and reaping thus far in this study. I pray that you have discovered the truth about these topics and apply them to your life. Let's wrap up by reviewing what we have learned in this study and discuss ways that we may begin to incorporate this newfound knowledge into our everyday lives.

### **SOWING AND REAPING DISCOVERED**

The first thing I want to look at in this summary is the revelation of sowing and reaping. It was amazing to me after going through the scriptures to actually discover the law of sowing and reaping in the Bible. This spiritual law is not some theory made up by people and supported by scripture. No! The Bible actually reveals this principle to be true and ordained by God.

However, we must consider that incorporating sowing and reaping will involve faith in God on our part. It may seem difficult sometimes to give when we would rather keep for ourselves. However, when we give we ensure provisions from God.

### **APPLICATION**

How can we apply sowing and reaping to our lives? The fact is that sowing will produce a harvest. Therefore, we can sow into ourselves to produce self-improvement for example or we can sow into someone or something else for his or her provisions for example. Sowing into ourselves will benefit us directly<sup>17</sup> whereas sowing into others will benefit others as well as you by the principle of sowing and reaping. Whenever you sow expect to reap a harvest. So invest in yourself and plant seeds of kindness, compassion, and love into others. Both will give you a harvest. However, do not forsake the sowing into other's lives because that is how you obtain treasures in heaven. Also, don't equate giving money when dealing with sowing or receiving money when dealing with harvesting.

### **TITHING DISCOVERED**

We have learned a great deal about the tithe in this study. We have found most specifically that the tithe was designed to provide **food** for the Levites, widows, orphans, and foreigners. The only correlation of tithing between the Old and New Testament is giving. Tithing was a particular case of giving to meet needs. We have also found that the tithing message in many churches is not accurate and does not consider the New Covenant. Trying to follow the tithe law will indeed nullify anything that God may try to direct you in relation to giving.

Tithing is not a practice that we are supposed to follow as a commandment though it is not a bad idea for budgeting purposes. Remember that we said earlier that you should plan your giving. Blindly giving 10% to your church is not sowing seeds in any way unless the money you give is specifically allocated to ministry or benevolence and you decided to give it.

It has been shown that tithing is of little consequence to the New Testament Christian. What is more important is obedience to the voice of God (that was also true in the Old Testament times). We have been given a higher order by which to live. The higher order is the expression of the love of God by giving abundantly with total faith that God will meet all of our needs when we give. Hoarding because of fear of tomorrow's need will result in poverty because no seeds were sown and the law of sowing and reaping was not activated to avail your provisions.

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<sup>17</sup> It may also benefit others indirectly because of your increased knowledge, ability, or resources that were produced from you sowing into yourself.

## **GIVING DISCOVERED**

We saw in this study how very important the art of giving really is to the New Testament Christian. Giving is a lifestyle that we practice to sow love, benevolence, and compassion for others. We give to meet needs. We give because we love others and care for their well-being. Giving requires faith in God because we must know that God will meet our needs and giving a sum of money will not mean lack at a later date.

## **CONCLUSION**

What is the conclusion of the whole matter? We could summarize all that was said in this study by:

***Be a loving, obedient, and abundant giver sowing seeds to increase your ability to give.***

Do not become bound by man's self-righteous laws. Be free to do and be all that God wants of you. Don't be obligated to tithe. Know the truth and be free.

Another very important aspect of this study is the revelation of the necessity to know the truth.

***(John 8:31-32 KJV) "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; {32} And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."***

First become a disciple of Christ (a student or learner). Then you will know the truth and that truth will make you free. The truth of God will liberate you to be all that God wants you to be and do all that God wants you to do. May God bless you abundantly with all your desires and provisions. Remember to always study your Bible for yourselves and acquire revelation from the word personally. After completing this study I discovered a book that you may find very informative. It is called "Beyond Tithes and Offerings" by Michael and Mitchell Webb. The ISBN number is 0-9660977-7-7 (On Time Publishing—<http://www.OnTimePub.com>).