

enough to store it. ¹¹ I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not drop their fruit before it is ripe,” says the Lord Almighty.

¹² “Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land,” says the Lord Almighty.

1. If someone were to ask how they might “return to the Lord,” what are some thoughts that might come to mind?
2. What is surprising about the answer that the Lord offers through Malachi?
3. Why might honoring God with tithes and offerings be an important first step?
4. Why might failure to honor God with tithes and offerings be considered robbing God?
5. How does God honor those who honor him?

SOME FOUNDATIONAL IDEAS

While the “tithe” is not required of New Testament believers it can (and should) serve as a pattern for our giving.

- We give out of honor and reverence to God.
- We give joyfully and cheerfully (2 Corinthians 9:7)
- We give recognizing that God is the ultimate source of all that we have and we trust him to generously meet all of our needs (2 Corinthians 9:8-10; Philippians 4:19).
- We give to support God’s work in the local church and throughout the world (1 Corinthians 9:14).
- Our giving should reflect a concern for the poor and needy (1 Corinthians 16:1; Galatians 2:10)

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SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2023

LIVE GENEROUSLY

PART TWO: A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE TITHE

The foundation for generous living is carefully woven into the fabric of Scripture. It has deep roots in both the Old and the New Testament. It has even deeper roots in the heart and character of God.

From the creation we are reminded that “God created us a reflection of his heart and character to steward the resources he has entrusted to our care for his glory, the benefit of others and our joy (Genesis 1:26-27; 2:15; Psalm 8:5-8).”

In God’s promise to Abraham, God not only promises to make Abraham into a great nation, he also promises that Abraham will be a blessing and all the nations of the earth will be blessed through him (Genesis 12:2-3).

David is able to celebrate the generosity of God’s people by reflecting on who God is and how he has enabled them to give such a generous gift.

“Praise be to you, Lord, the God of our father Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. ¹¹ Yours, Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours... Who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand... ¹⁶ Lord our God, all this abundance that we have provided for building you a temple for your Holy Name comes from your hand, and all of it belongs to you (1 Chronicles 29:10-11;14,16).

More than anything else our generosity is shaped by the heart of Christ. Paul challenges us:

But since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you—see that you also excel in this grace of giving... ⁹ For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich (2 Corinthians 8:7, 9).

We not only find the pattern for generosity throughout Scripture, the principle of generosity was also enshrined in God's Covenant with Israel as God instructs his people on how and why they should give. In this study we will explore the principle of the tithe and how it may or may not be a pattern for us today.

ABRAHAM GIVES A TENTH TO MELCHIZEDEK

GENESIS 14:18-20 Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, ¹⁹ and he blessed Abram, saying, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. ²⁰ And praise be to God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand." Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.

1. What are Abraham and Melchizedek celebrating/commemorating as they share bread and wine?
2. What is significant about the fact that Abraham offers a "tenth of everything" to Melchizedek?
3. What is significant about the fact that Melchizedek offers "bread and wine to Abraham?"

JACOB PROMISES A TENTH TO GOD

GENESIS 28:13-15; 20-22 He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. ¹³ There above it stood the Lord, and he said: "I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. ¹⁴ Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. ¹⁵ I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

²⁰ Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear ²¹ so that I return safely to my father's household, then the Lord will be my God ²² and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth."

1. What does God promise Jacob?
2. What does Jacob promise in return?
3. What may or may not be significant about the fact this promise is made in "the house of God?"

ISRAEL INSTRUCTED TO GIVE A TENTH BACK TO GOD

DEUTERONOMY 14:22-29 Be sure to set aside a tenth of all that your fields produce each year. ²³ Eat the tithe of your grain, new wine and olive oil, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks in the presence of the Lord your God at the place he will choose as a dwelling for his Name, so that you may learn to revere the Lord your God always. ²⁴ But if that place is too distant and you have been blessed by the Lord your God and cannot carry your tithe (because the place where the Lord will choose to put his Name is so far away), ²⁵ then exchange your tithe for silver, and take the silver with you and go to the place the Lord your God will choose. ²⁶ Use the silver to buy whatever you like: cattle, sheep, wine or other fermented drink, or anything you wish. Then you and your household shall eat there in the presence of the Lord your God and rejoice. ²⁷ And do not neglect the Levites living in your towns, for they have no allotment or inheritance of their own.

²⁸ At the end of every three years, bring all the tithes of that year's produce and store it in your towns, ²⁹ so that the Levites (who have no allotment or inheritance of their own) and the foreigners, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns may come and eat and be satisfied, and so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.

1. What are the purposes of the tithe highlighted in this text?
2. What are some of the attitudes and postures that should accompany our giving?
3. Why is it important that a portion of the tithe be set aside to celebrate God's provision in his presence with friends and family?
4. Who are the Levites? Why is it important not to neglect them?
5. Why is it important to remember the foreigners, the fatherless and the widows who live in your town?

A CALL TO RETURN TO THE LORD

MALACHI 3:7-12 Ever since the time of your ancestors you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you," says the Lord Almighty. "But you ask, 'How are we to return?'

⁸ "Will a [a person] rob God? Yet you rob me. "But you ask, 'How are we robbing you?' "In tithes and offerings.

⁹ You are under a curse—your whole nation—because you are robbing me.

¹⁰ Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room