

Give First and Generously – Worshiping Christ Through Cheerful Generosity



Our Creator God made heaven and earth and everything in it through Christ Jesus. Our Sustainer God is how all things consist, without Him we don't exist. Further, He has redeemed me and you by giving Himself over to death, sacrificing His heavenly state, becoming low, and then sacrificing His humbled state by a tortuous death on the cross. As Abraham demonstrated before the law, and Paul affirms in, we respond by giving the first and best portion of our blessings back to God with joy. Generous giving glorifies our Triune God and demonstrates that our hope is in Him, not in money.

Scriptural Foundations for Christian Tithing and Offerings

Here is a comprehensive survey from Genesis to Revelation of the biblical case for tithes and offerings.

OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis — The Pre-Mosaic Origins

Abraham's tithe to Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18–20) After defeating the kings, Abraham gave a tenth of everything to Melchizedek, priest of God Most High. This is the first recorded tithe in Scripture — *before* the Mosaic Law — showing that giving a tenth is a principle rooted in creation-era worship, not merely legal obligation.

Jacob's vow at Bethel (Gen. 28:20–22) Jacob vowed to give God a tenth of all he received, demonstrating that tithing was a voluntary act of devotion and covenant response even among the patriarchs.

Leviticus & Numbers — The Mosaic Law

The tithe belongs to the Lord (Lev. 27:30–32) "A tithe of everything from the land... belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD." The tithe is framed not as a gift *to* God but as returning what already *belongs* to Him.

The Levitical tithe (Num. 18:21–24) God appointed the tithe to support the Levites who had no land inheritance, establishing the principle that those who serve in ministry are supported by the community's giving.

The tithe of the tithe (Num. 18:26) The Levites themselves tithed a tenth of what they received to the priests — even ministers are called to give.

Deuteronomy — Celebration and Community

The festival tithe (Deut. 14:22–27) A second tithe was used for communal worship feasts — rejoicing before the Lord. Giving was tied to *joy*, not just duty.

The poor tithe (Deut. 14:28–29; 26:12) Every third year, the tithe was directed toward the Levite, foreigner, fatherless, and widow — giving had a strong social justice dimension.

First-fruits confession (Deut. 26:1–11) Offering first-fruits was accompanied by a recitation of God's saving acts — giving was an act of *theological memory and worship*.

Proverbs & Malachi — Wisdom and Warning

Proverbs 3:9–10 "Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing." First-fruits giving is connected to trust in God's provision.

Malachi 3:8–12 — The most direct tithing passage in all Scripture God accuses Israel of *robbing* Him by withholding tithes and offerings. He issues the famous challenge: "*Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse... Test me in this... and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven.*" Key themes:

- Robbing God is possible through non-giving
 - The "storehouse" (temple/local congregation) is the destination
 - God promises supernatural blessing for faithful giving
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Nehemiah — Restoring the Practice

Nehemiah 10:35–39; 13:10–12 Nehemiah reestablished tithing after the exile as a core act of covenant renewal. When tithing ceased, the Levites abandoned the temple. Giving sustains the house of God.

Chronicles — Generous Giving

2 Chronicles 31:4–12 Hezekiah commanded the people to give tithes; they gave so generously the storehouses overflowed. Revival and generous giving went hand in hand.

NEW TESTAMENT

The Gospels — Jesus Affirms and Deepens Giving

Matthew 23:23 / Luke 11:42 Jesus rebukes the Pharisees not for tithing but for *neglecting justice, mercy, and faithfulness* while tithing. Critically, He says: "*You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former.*" Jesus explicitly upholds tithing while calling for heart transformation.

Mark 12:41–44 / Luke 21:1–4 — The Widow's Offering Jesus commends a widow who gave *all she had* — establishing that the *spirit* of giving matters more than the amount, and sacrificial giving is the highest form.

Luke 19:1–10 — Zacchaeus Upon salvation, Zacchaeus spontaneously gave half his possessions and repaid fourfold. New life in Christ produces *extravagant* generosity.

Acts — The Early Church

Acts 2:44–45; 4:32–35 The early Jerusalem church gave *beyond* the tithe — selling property and possessions to meet one another's needs. The New Covenant community raised the bar *above* the Old Testament minimum.

Acts 11:29–30 The disciples gave "each according to his ability" for famine relief — proportional, need-driven giving.

Paul's Letters — The Theology of Covenantal Giving

1 Corinthians 16:2 "On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income." Paul establishes: *systematic, regular, proportional* giving as the norm.

2 Corinthians 8–9 — The magna carta of Christian giving

- 8:1–5: The Macedonian churches gave out of *extreme poverty* with *overflowing joy* — "even beyond their ability."
- 8:7: Paul calls generosity one of the marks of Christian maturity, alongside faith, speech, and knowledge.
- 8:9: The supreme motivation — "*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.*" The Incarnation is the model.
- 9:6–7: "*Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly... God loves a cheerful giver.*" Giving should be voluntary, joyful, and generous.
- 9:8: God is able to make *all grace* abound so that we are always able to give.
- 9:10–12: Generous giving glorifies God and supplies the needs of His people.

Galatians 6:6 Those who are taught the Word are to share materially with their teachers — supporting ministry.

Philippians 4:14–19 Paul thanks the Philippians for their financial partnership. He frames their giving as "*a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God*" — elevating it to the language of temple worship.

1 Timothy 5:17–18 Elders who lead well are worthy of "double honor" — including financial support, citing Deuteronomy 25:4 and Luke 10:7: "*The worker deserves his wages.*"

Hebrews — Melchizedek Revisited

Hebrews 7:1–10 The author revisits Abraham's tithe to Melchizedek at length, arguing that Jesus is a priest in the order of Melchizedek — *greater* than the Levitical priesthood. If Abraham tithed to Melchizedek, how much more should believers give to Christ? The pre-law tithe points *forward* to Christ, giving it permanent theological weight.

James — Warning to the Wealthy

James 5:1–6 A stern warning to those who hoarded wealth — the failure to give justly brings judgment. The flip side: generous giving is righteousness.

Revelation — Worship as Total Surrender

Revelation 4:10–11 The elders cast their *crowns* — everything they have — before the throne of God. Ultimate worship is total offering of self and possessions to the Lord.

Revelation 21–22 The New Jerusalem needs no temple, no sun — *God Himself* is the provision. All of Christian giving throughout history is a foretaste of this: acknowledging that *everything* belongs to Him.

Summary of Key Principles

Principle	Key Texts
The tithe predates the Law	Gen. 14; Heb. 7
The tithe belongs to God	Lev. 27:30
Withholding is robbing God	Mal. 3:8
Jesus upholds tithing	Matt. 23:23

Christ's poverty motivates giving	2 Cor. 8:9
Give cheerfully and proportionally	2 Cor. 9:7; 1 Cor. 16:2
Giving supports ministry	Num. 18; 1 Tim. 5:17
Sacrificial giving is highest	Mark 12:41–44
New Covenant giving <i>exceeds</i> the tithe	Acts 2–4; 2 Cor. 8:3
All giving is worship	Phil. 4:18; Rev. 4:10

The overall biblical trajectory moves from the tithe as a legal floor in the Old Testament to grace-driven generosity that transcends the tithe in the New Testament — motivated not by law but by the immeasurable gift of Christ Himself.

Application:

Make giving to your local church a priority that flows from faith in Christ's provision, not from leftovers.

First we give, and then we save, and then we spend wisely. It is a great habit and routine to follow our thankfulness for the blessings God has given us.

