

# Why We Bring the Tithe

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I invite you to hear God's words from Malachi 3:10:<sup>1</sup>

Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

Our spotlight is on the first two words of this passage—"Bring ye." My sermon is about stewardship and is designed to clarify our understanding of why we do *what* we do. Why do we bring the tithe? What is the motivation? Why is it that many of you Sabbath after Sabbath faithfully bring tithe to the Lord's house? About 45 percent of our members are regular tithers. Why do these individuals bring the tithe to the Lord? What is it that they know and experience that nontithers do not? Why do non-tithers not bring their tithe? What is it that they do not know and experience? What can we say about tithing so that all are impelled, propelled, and compelled to be tithers?

## Why tithe?

Why do we bring the tithe? There are several biblical reasons why every blood-bought, born-again believer who has been blended into the body of Christ should bring the tithe. The *first* reason is that we understand the command. Look again at Malachi 3:10. It says, "Bring ye." You will notice that this is not an option or suggestion. He did not say, "I suggest that you bring the tithe." He says, "Bring ye." That is a command. It is a command from God telling us how God wants us to support His work. Tithing is not a conference plan, local church plan, or the Christian's plan. It is God's plan.

Tithing is a very *sacred plan*. Anything that God gives us is sacred because it is of divine origin and comes directly from God. It is also a very *simple plan*. The word *tithe* means "tenth." Tithing is not as complicated as figuring out your income taxes. God says, divide your income into ten parts and bring one-tenth of your income for the Lord to support His work. God leaves it up to us what to do with the remaining

nine-tenths.

Tithing is also a very *satisfying plan*. God says, when you do it, “I will open the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing.” Why does He say the windows and not the doors of heaven? I believe it’s because heaven is pictured as God’s house and a house always has more windows than it has doors. Usually, your house has a front door and back door, but there are windows in every room. God says, I am poised and waiting to open every window in heaven and pour you out a blessing so that you will not have enough room for it. When you do not have room enough to receive something, that means there will be an overflow to bless those in your concentric circle of contacts. So it is a simple, sacred, and satisfying plan.

### **Why follow God’s plan?**

There are three reasons why following God’s plan is the best idea.

First, God *expects it*. He says, “Bring ye.” He just says it and the implication is that He expects us to do it. Why would He command it if He did not expect us to do it? God expects it.

And then, God *explains it*. He tells us why He wants us to do it. He says, “that there may be meat in mine house.” When God’s people obey His command, there will be more than enough resources in God’s house to do what He wants done. God expects it. God explains it.

And finally, God *encourages it*. He says, “prove me now here- with.” That is a challenge from God to you. He says, Prove Me. He did not say to prove yourselves, rather prove God. That is where a lot of saints become disillusioned—they try to prove themselves. They sit down with a pencil and a piece of paper and they figure up their income and their out-go only to discover that there is too much month at the end of their money; and they say, “I don’t think I am able to tithe.” That is because those individuals have misread the command.

God did not say put yourself to the test. He said, Put Me to the test and see how much better off you will be with nine-tenths, plus Me as your Partner, than you would be with ten-tenths by yourself. For, you see, you do not live by your paycheck—you live by the blessings of God. You may have picked up your paycheck from your job, but if God did not wake you up this morning, what good is your paycheck? The issue is not the size of your paycheck; it is how you are blessed.

It would be so much easier for nontithers to become tithers if they understood and embraced the principle that one does not live by the paycheck—one lives by the blessings of God. If, for example, your paycheck is \$1,000 and you did not tithe, but had \$1,500 in medical bills, you have a deficit of \$500. Nothing is left for yourself. Conversely, if your paycheck is \$1,000 and you return \$100 tithe, God may bless you so you did not get sick, then you still have \$900 for yourself. So, it is never how much money you make—it is always how much you are blessed. And God says, Remove the barriers and the blessings will flow; return to Me My tithe and I will open the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing so that there

will not be room enough to receive it.

## **Tithing is God's plan**

Tithing is not a human plan—it is God's plan. It is a sacred, simple, and satisfying plan. God expects it. God explains it. God encourages it. The *first* reason we bring the tithe is because we understand the commandment.

But there is a *second* reason why we bring the tithe. Turn with me to 2 Chronicles 31:11, 12: “Then Hezekiah commanded to prepare chambers in the house of the LORD; and they prepared them, and brought in the offerings and *the tithes* and the dedicated things faithfully” (emphasis added). These verses are climactic to a series of reforms that had taken place under King Hezekiah. Hezekiah was a godly king who led the nation in the greatest spiritual revivals. He opened the house of the Lord that his father had closed, cleansed the land of the false gods the people had been worshiping, reinstated the feast and festival days, and started offering sacrifices and burnt offerings again. The Bible says that when the burnt offerings were made, the sight, smell, and sound began a revival; the people consecrated themselves and brought the tithe unto the Lord. Why did they bring the tithe? They brought the tithe because they understood consecration.

A good sign of the consecration of a Christian is bringing tithe to the house of the Lord. You see, the tithe is not just one-tenth of our income—it is an expression of the dedication of all of our income. When we bring the 10 percent, we acknowledge God's Lordship over 100 percent. We are saying, “Lord, I want to use the other nine-tenths to glorify You. All that I have and ever hope to be, I consecrate to You.” Why do we bring the tithe? Because we understand consecration.

We are stewards of everything and owners of nothing. In order to remind us that we are stewards over everything and owners of nothing, God always reserves a portion for Himself. He says, You are stewards over six days, but the seventh day belongs to Me. Likewise, you are stewards over nine-tenths of your income, but one-tenth belongs to Me. And when we do not give God His portion, God collects it in His way.

Do you remember how God told Israel to work the fields, but that a portion of the field belonged to Him? God instructed them to rest every seventh year the portion that belonged to Him. But what did Israel do? The people worked the fields for 490 years and did not rest God's portion for one single year. You divide 490 years by seven and that means that God had seventy years of soil rest coming—and God collected it! When they went into bondage, how long were they captive in Babylonia? Seventy years. Second Chronicles 36:21 states that they were held in captivity “until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths [rest].” God had seventy years of soil rest coming, and He collected it.

Beloved, we can wear God's tithe on our backs, drive God's tithe to work, spend God's tithe on vacation, use God's tithe for tuition or to pay our monthly bills—but God will collect His tithe. God says, Give Me the portion that belongs to

Me—or you are cursed with a curse. Sometimes when we file for bankruptcy, lie sick on a hospital bed, or stand in the unemployment line, it is because we are cursed with a curse. For our sake, we can never put God in second place—God will not allow that. So the second reason we bring the tithe is because we understand consecration.

But there is a *third* reason why we bring the tithe to the Lord. Turn with me to Genesis 28:22. Jacob is fleeing from his brother, Esau, because Esau threatened to chop off his head. He comes to Haran at nightfall and uses a rock for his pillow and spends the night in fitful dreaming. He saw that God had constructed a ladder that could get folks from earth to heaven. Jacob woke up the next morning, a thoroughly converted young man.

Genesis 28:20–22 tells us that Jacob made a covenant with God. Up until this point in his life, his philosophy was to get, get, get. This is what got him in trouble with his brother in the first place: get his brother's birthright; get his brother's blessing; get his brother's benefits! That is why many nontithers do not bring the tithe because of the "get" syndrome—get another dress; get another car; get another house—get, get, get! But when Jacob met God, his life was changed. Jacob proclaimed, "Of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee" (Genesis 28:22). His conversion changed the *get* syndrome into the *give* syndrome. Why did he bring the tithe? *He brought the tithe because he finally understood conversion.* Do you understand conversion, what it means to be saved? You see, you are saved because of a gift—"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son" (John 3:16). Jesus loved us so much that He *gave* Himself. And you cannot accept the gift of a Savior and yet not love Him ten cents' worth out of every dollar. Why do we bring the tithe? We bring the tithe because we understand conversion.

An unconverted pocketbook is an index to an unconverted heart. God does not want the gift—He wants the giver. God does not want the tithe—He wants the tither. God does not want your money—He wants you! Jesus did not die for your money—He died for you. Jesus knows that when He has you, He will have your money. And if He does not have your money, it is because He does not have *you*!

Do you remember the story of Jesus' encounter with Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1–10)? While walking under a sycamore tree, Jesus said to Zacchaeus, "Come down, I'm going to eat dinner at your house today." After Jesus came to his house, Zacchaeus was never the same again. Zacchaeus was converted that day; and before Jesus left, Zacchaeus said to Jesus, "The half of my goods, I give to the poor." The first proof of his conversion was his willingness to give. Zacchaeus said, I'm starting out, not just with 10 percent, but I'm going to give up to 50 percent. And watch what Jesus said to Zacchaeus, "This day has salvation come to your house." We are not saved because we give—we give because we are saved. We do not tithe in order to be saved—we tithe because we are saved. So the third reason we bring the tithe is because we understand conversion. There is a *fourth* reason that we bring the tithe. Turn to Genesis 14:18, where we find the first mention of

tithing. The first mention of any subject in the Bible is very important because it gives us the key to its importance. In Genesis 14, we are told Abraham rescued his nephew Lot out of the hands of the king of Elam. On the way back home, he met two kings. One was the king of Sodom, who said to Abraham, Give me. But, there was also the king of Salem, Melchizedek, priest of the Most High God. And what does he do? Scripture says in Genesis 14:18 that when he came out to meet Abraham, Melchizedek brought *bread and wine*. What did that mean? We know from reading the book of Hebrews that Melchizedek was a type of Christ. So a type of Christ comes out to meet Abraham, and what does he have in his hand? He has *bread and wine*.

You see, Old Testament Abraham in that distant land looked forward by faith to the Cross; and in that bread and wine, he saw the body and blood of Christ. Genesis 14:20 says that Abraham gave Melchizedek tithes of all that he possessed. Abraham looked forward and, by faith, saw Calvary. The very next thing the Bible says is that he gave his tithes. Why did he give the tithes? He brought the tithes because he understood Calvary. We, too, bring the tithes because we understand Calvary. For what Abraham looked forward to by *faith*, you and I look back to as a historical *fact*.

We look backward and see Christ with His broken body and blood poured out for us on a hill called Calvary. And the Christian says, Did He do that for me? He died in agony upon the cruel cross, covered with blood and spit and shame, for me? He suffered as no one else has ever been called upon to suffer, for me? The very least that I can do is to bring the tithes. So the fourth reason we bring the tithes is because we understand Calvary.

### **Prove Me now**

Remember the words of Malachi that say, "Prove Me now." You can hear testimonies of those who tithe faithfully and hear of the blessings they experience. But you will never know the full blessing until you put God to the test. I challenge you today, not for my sake or the sake of this church, but for your sake. You are the one who will win or lose. You have been thinking, praying, and struggling with it for a long time, but you have never taken that step of faith—put God to the test.

Tell the Lord that you will put Him to the test for six months; and if He fails you, *you* will quit tithing. But, if God keeps His promise, be a faithful tither. God is willing if you are willing. And at the end of six months, if God failed you, I will give you an opportunity to give your testimony before this entire congregation and tell everybody how God failed you. God says to you, Put Me to the test and see how I will bless you.

Prove me *now*—not next week, next month, or next year! Start right *now*! Go home today and get down on your knees and claim Malachi 3:10. And for the next six months, come to the Lord's house bringing the Lord's tithes on the Lord's day and see if the Lord will not do what He says He will do.

Why do we bring the tithes? We bring the tithes because we understand the

command. We bring the tithe because we understand consecration. We bring the tithe because we understand conversion. We bring the tithe because we understand Calvary. Do you really understand Calvary?

Do you understand Calvary as Frances Ridley Havergal understood Calvary? Listen to the words of her classic hymn "I Gave My Life for Thee." Jesus is speaking directly to you when He says,

I gave my life for thee,  
My precious blood I shed,  
That thou might'st ransomed be,  
And quickened from the dead;  
I gave, I gave My life for thee,  
What hast thou given for Me?<sup>2</sup>

What have *you* given for Christ? How much is Christ worth to you? Is He worth as much as a dime out of every dollar? How much have you given to Him? Do you understand Calvary?

*Taken from Beyond Blessings, pp. 109-117*

**Endnotes**

1. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical quotations are from the King James Version.
2. Frances Ridley Havergal, "I Gave My Life for Thee," *The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald®, 1985), no. 281.