

Biglife® /

GIVING SUMMARY AND STUDY SERIES

BIBLICAL GIVING EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To tithe or not to tithe? That is the question. But it is not the only question, or perhaps even the best question. This executive summary is a summary of giving from both the Old and New Testaments to serve as a guide for followers of Jesus to model God-honoring, faithful, obedient, and sacrificial generosity.

TITHING IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Tithing (or giving) was always intended to be a joy and blessing. Sadly, it often deteriorated into something other than God's original design. In the Old Testament the tithe was a requirement (not optional) of God's Law for Israel. But the fact that it was a command to follow didn't make it a bad thing. The Ten Commandments were exactly that—commandments. And yet every commandment given was for Israel's good.

The Old Testament tithe, or first fruits, was the first 10% of one's crops and livestock to support the work of the temple and priests. But that was not the only giving requirements in the Old Testament. For example:

- > 10% of everything from the land was to be given to the Lord (Leviticus 27:30-33).
- > A family was to bring their tithe and go to the place of worship (Jerusalem) to have a feast and celebration to the Lord (Deuteronomy 14:22-27).
- > Once every third year there was a tithe for the poor of the land (Deuteronomy 14:28-29).
- > There were also optional times to give, like when the tabernacle and temple were built (Exodus 25:1-9).
- > By following the law, they also would have lost money, like when they had to let their land rest or let their slaves go free after a certain amount of years (Jeremiah 34:14).

All of these laws or regulations would have pushed the total amount designated to around 20-30%, depending on the year.

One way to understand the Old Testament tithe is to look at it as God's method of proportionate taxation to provide for the needs of the priests and Levites in the sacrificial system, as well as the poor of the land. Since Israel was, and is, God's chosen nation, this makes sense

GIVING MONEY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

All of Israel, including Jesus and the Jewish Pharisees, were commanded to obey the Law, and thus the portions of the Law pertaining to tithing. The Gospels, although in the New Testament,

are written about a period of time when the Law is still in effect, that is, until Jesus fulfilled the Law by his life, and death on the cross.

Jesus mentions the tithe in a stiff rebuke of the self-righteous Jewish religious leaders. In his rebuke he doesn't condemn the tithe—he affirms it, because at that time Jesus, and all Israel was still under the Law. What he condemns is the neglect of justice and love for God (see Luke 11:44). In the same way Jesus exposed the self-righteous "token giving" of the wealthy in contrast to the sacrificial giving of the widow in Mark 12:41-44, Jesus exposes the wicked hearts of the religious leaders that no amount of tithing could cover up.

The only other New Testament reference to tithing is recorded in Hebrews 7, but it has nothing to do with a guide to giving for those living under the New Covenant. Beyond that the New Testament is silent on the matter of tithing...but it is not silent about giving.

The New Testament does not designate a percentage of income a person should set aside, but it does say that gifts should be in keeping with one's income and ability (1 Corinthians 16:2).

Many Christian leaders have taken the 10 percent figure from the Old Testament tithe and applied it as a standard for Christians in their giving. However, this is just a recommendation, as it is not actually found in the New Testament. God teaches us in the New Testament about the importance and benefits of giving and instructs us to give as we are able. For some, that means giving much more than 10%, while for others that may mean giving less. It all depends on the ability of the believer and the needs of the Body of Christ.

Every believer should pray and seek God's wisdom as to how much God would have them to give. If one chooses to practice the Old Testament's requirement of the tithe, that is fine, and he/she should give with a grateful heart with pure motives and an attitude of worship to God and service to the body of Christ. As 2 Corinthians 9:7 says, "Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver".

In the New Testament God tells believers they are to be generous, sacrificial, expectant and cheerful givers that sow seeds for Kingdom investment often! Does that describe you?

GROUP STUDY SERIES

Use the following verses in your Biglife Group to study about the Biblical ways you and your Group should be using your time and money to help further God's Kingdom. If you want to study more weeks than the 4 listed below, use the verses on pages 6-9.

WEEK 1 - FOLLOWING CHRIST'S EXAMPLE

 LOOK UP: Philippians 2:1-11

 **PRACTICE:** In your group, talk about how Christ gave up everything, including the riches of Heaven, and how your group can use it's time and money to follow Christ's example.

WEEK 2 - GIVE GENEROUSLY

 LOOK UP: 2 Corinthians 8:1-15

 **PRACTICE:** In your group, talk about how you can give generously of your time and money to those in your group, your city, and the world.

WEEK 3 - HELPING THE POOR

 LOOK UP: Luke 12:33-34; James 1:27

 **PRACTICE:** In your group, decide how you can help the poor in the coming weeks in your group, city and the world and commit to do it.

WEEK 4 - SUPPORTING CHRISTIAN WORKERS

 LOOK UP: 1 Corinthians 9:6-14

 **PRACTICE:** In your group, talk about if there is anyone you should support financially and in prayer who is making disciples (either part-time or full-time). If someone has helped you start a group and is discipling you, do you need to help support their needs if they are living off the support of Christians so they can further God's kingdom?

GIVING AND MINISTRY ENGAGEMENT

YOUR BIGLIFE GROUP

God tells us to love our neighbor as ourselves. That includes those close to us, like those in our Biglife Group. How can you show Christ's love to those in your group? How can you minister to their needs? This may include giving financially or giving of your time to help them.

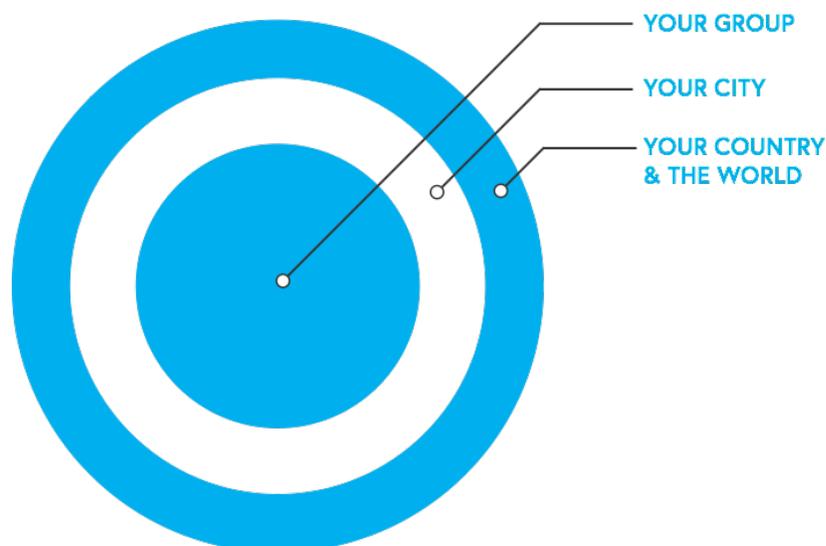
YOUR CITY/COMMUNITY

Our neighbors also include those in the city or community in which we live, even if we don't know them. The parable of the Good Samaritan is a great example of this (Luke 10:25-37). How can your group or network of groups show Christ's love to those in your city or community? How can you minister to their needs? This should include giving financially and giving of your time to help people or the organizations that serve those in need.

YOUR COUNTRY AND THE WORLD

All people have been made in God's image and are precious to him. God tells us that loving our neighbor includes loving all people, in all places. Before Jesus ascended into Heaven, he told his disciples to go into all the world to preach the Gospel and make disciples.

How can your group or network of groups show Christ's love to those in other parts of the world? How can you go and make disciples of others around the world? This should include giving financially and giving of your time to those around the world in need. You could also give to a ministry or missions organization like Biglife who's mission is to empower believers world wide to reach and disciple their own people for Jesus Christ. You can learn more at www.big.life



BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF BEING SUPPORTED

BELIEVERS SUPPORT THOSE WHO DISCIPLE THEM

Paul tells us that those who preach the gospel have the right to receive support from other believers (I Corinthians 9:3-14).

SELF-SUPPORTED (TENTMAKER)

Paul provided for himself and his companions (Acts 20:34-35) .

BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF ASKING FOR MONEY

IT'S OK TO ASK FOR IT

Paul told believers to set aside money. In other words, he asked for it (I Corinthians 16:1-4).

NO ONE ASKED FOR IT

Believers just gave as they were moved (Acts 4:32-37).

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES TO FOLLOW

GENEROSITY

Gifts of money were given to the believers in Jerusalem when they were in need (2 Corinthians 8:1-15).

ANONYMOUSLY

Don't give for others to see (Matthew 6:1-4).

GIVE EXPECTANTLY

God will repay us for our giving, either in this life or the life to come (2 Corinthians 9:6; Proverbs 19:7; I Timothy 6:18-19).

GIVE FROM YOUR MEANS

God allows us to choose how much we want to give, but tells us to give based on how much we have been given (2 Corinthians 9:7; Acts 11:27-39; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2).

WE ARE TO GIVE MONEY TO HELP MEET NEEDS

We are to give to Christians in general (1 Corinthians 9:6-14).

We are to give to Christian workers (Acts 2:44-45).

We are to give to the poor, widows, etc... (Luke 12:33-34; James 1:27).

CHRIST IS OUR MOTIVATION TO GIVE

Both by his example of giving himself and by his commands to give! (Philippians 2:1-11).

OLD TESTAMENT TITHING

SUMMARY

For times Pre-Mosaic Law, giving looks to be voluntary (Abraham and Jacob are the only two examples). For the Israelites under the law, the tithe was a mandatory thing required by the law.

There seems to be three regular types of tithes: the Levite tithe, festival tithe, and the poor tithe. In total, these three tithes could have been 20-30% of a person's annual income.

The tithe was God's "ordained tax" under the Old Testament government system.

PRE-MOSAIC LAW

Abraham gave 1/10th of everything (Genesis 14:18-20).

Jacob also gave 1/10th (Genesis 28:20-22).

Both of these examples seem to be voluntary and are pre-mosaic law. Also, it seems both Abraham and Jacob only tithed once during their life, according to what is written in the Bible. They could have tithed more, but it was not recorded.

AFTER THE LAW

A tithe of everything from the land belongs to the Lord. Note that money is not involved here, rather food and animals are to be offered to the priests (Leviticus 27:30-33).

Money (gold, jewels, jewelry, etc...) was to be given for the temple to be built as each person was prompted. This seems to be in addition to the regular tithe (Exodus 25:1-9).

Every third year the people were to tithe to their town to help the poor people. This was probably in addition to the normal tithe (Deuteronomy 14:28-29).

The family was to bring their tithe and go to the place of worship (Jerusalem) to have a feast and celebration to the Lord. The money they used to buy the food for the feast and the travel money was probably an additional "tithe" on top of the tithe that belonged to the Lord (Deuteronomy 14:22-27).

"Don't rob God...Don't hold back your tithe and animal sacrifices and see God's blessing in your life...or curses if you do hold back" (Malachi 3:8-10). Throughout the Old Testament we see God telling his people he will bless them if they obey him and curse them if they don't. This passage on tithing and animal sacrifices is no different and sums it up well.

The tithe was used to help support the priests who worked for the Lord (Numbers 18:20-24).

NEW TESTAMENT

SUMMARY

While the New Testament does not command believers to tithe, it is not silent on the subject of giving. To the contrary, it gives wise, practical advice (Luke 6:30, 38, 11:44, Romans 12:1, 2 Corinthians 8-9, Philippians 4:10-20)

Jesus rebukes the Pharisees for their hypocritical manner of tithing, according to the Old Testament Jewish laws. Jesus is not condemning the tithe system here, because they are under the Law of Moses, but rather the way in which the Pharisees did it. Matthew 23:23 and Luke 18:12

We are to give cheerfully: "Let each one do just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:7) We are to give according to our ability, or beyond if prompted by the Lord: "For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability they gave of their own accord" (2 Cor. 8:3).

This voluntary giving is exactly what Abraham and Jacob were doing before the institution of the Law, and is what all believers are to be doing today.

Believers today are free to give the amount they choose to give. If they want to give 10% as Abraham and Jacob did, they are perfectly free to do so. However, if they decide to give 9% or 11%, or 20% or 50%, then they may do that as well.

CONCLUSION

Ultimately, the Christian's standard of giving is not a fixed percentage point, but the example of our wonderful Savior -- "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9). Our standard of giving is Christ Himself, who did not give 10% or 20% or even 50%, but 100%! He gave everything He had, including His very life in order to redeem sinful men and women like you and me!

This is the ideal behind biblical giving: the offering of our very lives—including the time, talents and treasures God has entrusted to us—for the greater good of His kingdom. The apostle Paul and the early disciples did this and "turned the world upside down" (Acts 17:6). May the same be said of Jesus' followers today!

BIGLIFE

Biglife's mission is "To Empower believers worldwide to reach and disciple their own people for Jesus Christ."

Biglife supports disciple making movements all over the world. If you are interested in giving to Biglife financially by credit card or eCheck, praying for the ministry, or getting training, visit our webpage at: www.big.life

If you would like to give by mail, you can make a check out to "Biglife" and send it to:

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