

GIVING FREELY:

THE TRUTH ABOUT TITHING AND THE SUPERNATURAL POWER IN SPIRIT-LED GIVING

Psalm 119:160 says that “The sum of God’s Word is truth.” In other words, we must look at the entirety of Scripture to get the clearest picture of Truth. It’s too easy to take a handful of scriptures and form a false doctrine out of them without considering “the sum” of God’s Word.

Over the years, this has unfortunately happened to the word “tithe.” I’m not sure exactly when it happened or how, but somewhere along the line someone read a couple scriptures on tithing and decided this principle applied to us today. Consider, for instance, the words of the prophet Malachi:

Malachi 3:8-12—⁸“Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me.

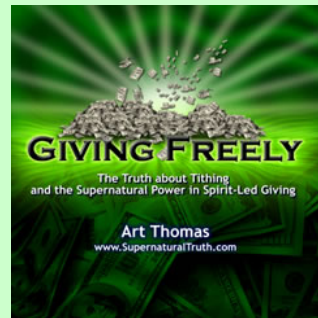
“But you ask, ‘How do we rob you?’

“In tithes and offerings. ⁹You are under a curse—the whole nation of you—because you are robbing me. ¹⁰Bring 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 you will not have room enough for it. ¹¹I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit,” says the LORD Almighty. ¹²“Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land,” says the LORD Almighty. (NIV)

You might be surprised to learn that tithing, although a clear biblical principle, no longer applies to God’s people—whether the Church or the nation of Israel. In fact, in this teaching you will learn why Jews today believe that *if* they tithed, they would be breaking the Law of Moses rather than keeping it! Here we will take a walk through the Scriptures, gathering a complete understanding through the verses on tithing that are often overlooked.

I will be mostly using the New International Version of the Bible because of its readability and popularity, but I understand that some people are diehard supporters of the King James Version. Feel free to look these verses up in the KJV, or any other version for that matter, because you will find that they have the same thing to say.

Acts 17:11 gives us a good picture of how I would encourage you to examine this teaching. It says, “Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.” Examine the Scriptures and see if what I have to say is true. If on any point I am not true to the sum of God’s Word, then I would encourage you to write me, Art Thomas, at Art@SupernaturalBlogger.com.



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Now, I know this is a touchy subject—especially since it has been a part of our Christian culture for at least a century. I want to make sure everyone understands up front that I am not here to tell you that you have been outright lied to or that your pastor has been deceiving or manipulating you. The fact is, our church leaders are simply teaching what they have been taught. They don't know any better. This teaching isn't meant to cause an uproar or to divide the Body of Christ—it is meant to bring correction and healing. 2 Timothy 3:16 tells us that all Scripture is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness; so all my corrections will be directly founded on the written Word of God. I am not speaking on my own authority.

With all that said, I would like to leave the disclaimers behind and get down to the meat of this teaching.

First of all, the word “tithe” literally means “tenth.” The tithe is a Biblical principle that was demonstrated in the book of Genesis before the Law of Moses was ever even written. In Genesis 28:18-22, Jacob has just had a dream about angels ascending and descending a ladder that stretched into heaven. He stood up the stone he had been using as a pillow, poured oil on it to demonstrate that it was marked and set apart for God, and named the place “Bethel,” which means “house of God.” Next, he made a vow in verse 22 saying, “...of all that You give me, I will give you a tenth.”

Now, if the tithe was a principle that was demonstrated long before Moses, then doesn't that mean it is *not* really a part of the Law? Not really. I'll explain in a little bit why tithing *is* a matter of law. For now, let's turn to the book of Leviticus.

When Moses finally received the Law on the mountain, tithing was discussed in great detail. But the more we read about the Mosaic Law's requirements regarding tithing, the less we see that it applies today—and for that matter, we see that if it does apply today then we've been doing it wrong! According to the Law of Moses, tithing has absolutely nothing to do with monetary income.

Leviticus 27:30-32—“A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD. ³¹If a man redeems any of his tithe, he must add a fifth of the value to it. ³²The entire tithe of the herd and flock—every tenth animal that passes under the shepherd's rod—will be holy to the LORD.” (NIV).

Here a tithe is first defined as a tenth of the grain and a tenth of the fruit that is harvested from each person's land. It is also said to be every tenth sheep and every tenth cow that passes under the shepherd's rod. Something interesting to note here is that if a person only had nine animals, they did not tithe. And for that matter, verse 33 requires that a person must not separate the good animals from the bad animals—the tithe needed to be completely random. If every tenth animal turned out to be either good or bad, you were not allowed to trade any of those animals out because they were holy to God.

How would we apply any of these verses to monetary giving? Hmm... “Every tenth bill you thumb through in your wallet is holy unto the Lord—no matter what value it has—

and if you only have nine or fewer bills, then you do not give.” Clearly, the instructions on tithing from Leviticus can’t be compared to monetary giving!

Let’s move on to the next bit of instructions on tithing. In the book of Numbers, chapter 18, we find some very clear directions:

Numbers 18:20-24—And the LORD said to Aaron, “You priests will receive no inheritance of land or share of property among the people of Israel. I am your inheritance and your share. ²¹As for the tribe of Levi, your relatives, I will pay them for their service in the Tabernacle with the tithes from the entire land of Israel.

²²“From now on, Israelites other than the priests and Levites are to stay away from the Tabernacle. If they come too near, they will be judged guilty and die. ²³The Levites must serve at the Tabernacle, and they will be held responsible for any offenses against it. This is a permanent law among you. But the Levites will receive no inheritance of land among the Israelites, ²⁴because I have given them the Israelites’ tithes, which have been set apart as offerings to the LORD. This will be the Levites’ share. That is why I said they would receive no inheritance of land among the Israelites.” (NLT).

There are several matters that come up in this passage. First it is revealed that only the priests and Levites are to go near the Tabernacle—anyone else will die. Today, however, 1 Peter 2:9 says that we are all a royal priesthood—we can therefore all approach the presence of God! Hebrews 4:16 says that we can approach God’s throne with boldness and freely receive His grace. We therefore have no need for Levites or priests to meet with God on our behalf. According to verses 23 and 24 of Numbers 18, only the Levites are to receive the tithe, but as we see here, the Church has no use for Levites because we can all approach God boldly. No Levites, no tithe.

For that matter, 2 Chronicles 31 is very specific that only the people who are proven to be Levites by the genealogies may partake in the tithe. If you’re not proven to be a Levite by the genealogies, then you may not collect any of the tithe for yourself. Unfortunately, in AD 70, the Romans destroyed the Jewish genealogies. Since then, no one could prove who was from what tribe, which meant that no one could prove who the Levites were.

Jews today do not offer a tithe—again, no Levites, no tithe. The Jewish teachers and leaders today agree that to pay a tithe to anyone but a Levite would be to violate the Law of Moses! Back when there were Levites, any non-Levite who was caught eating the food set aside for the priests was given one of the severest punishments in Jewish law: a sort of excommunication from the people called “karet.” But as you’ll see in a little bit, there was a good portion of the tithe that the person giving it *could* eat—you just weren’t allowed to eat the Levite’s share. We’ll get to that in a minute.

In Deuteronomy, we learn about the appropriate location where our tithes should be brought.

Deuteronomy 12:5-7—But you are to seek the place the LORD your God will choose from among all your tribes to put his Name there for his dwelling. To that place you must go; ⁶ there bring your burnt offerings and sacrifices, your tithes

and special gifts, what you have vowed to give and your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks.⁷ There, in the presence of the LORD your God, you and your families shall eat and shall rejoice in everything you have put your hand to, because the LORD your God has blessed you. (NIV)

What was the place in the Promised Land where the Lord chose to “put His name there for His dwelling?” Answer: Jerusalem; specifically the Temple. As soon as the Jews built the Temple in Jerusalem, this became the destination of all the tithe of Israel. So we should take our tithes to the Temple in Jerusalem, right? Or we could take the New Testament approach and take our tithe to our local church building, right? Hmm. What does the New Testament say is now the Temple of God?

1 Corinthians 3:16—Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? (NIV)

Now where are we supposed to take our tithes? No Levites to pay them to. No Temple in Jerusalem to take them to. Now what?

Well, the instructions don't stop there. Let's go a little further:

Deuteronomy 12:17,18—You must not eat in your own towns the tithe of your grain and new wine and oil, or the firstborn of your herds and flocks, or whatever you have vowed to give, or your freewill offerings or special gifts. Instead, you are to eat them in the presence of the LORD your God at the place the LORD your God will choose—you, your sons and daughters, your menservants and maidservants, and the Levites from your towns—and you are to rejoice before the LORD your God in everything you put your hand to. (NIV)

So the tithe was something that was eaten (unlike money), but more interesting to me is that the person giving it got to eat it too! The tithe was not merely something that was taken to the storehouses for the Levites—that was only done with some of it. Instead, the tithe was taken to Jerusalem where you, your family, and your servants would throw a big feast and share your food with the Levites!

Oh, and did I forget to mention verse 21? It says this: “If the place where the LORD your God chooses to put his Name [meaning Jerusalem] is too far away from you, you may slaughter animals from the herds and flocks the LORD has given you, as I have commanded you, *and in your own towns you may eat as much of them as you want.*”

So the tithe only applied to the people who lived close enough to Jerusalem to actually take it there! Verse 26 then says that you can simply take to Jerusalem “your consecrated things and whatever you have vowed to give.” No tithe.

Then Deuteronomy 14 gives a slightly more detailed instruction for those who have too much grain and cattle to take it all to Jerusalem:

Deuteronomy 14:22-27—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 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. (NIV)

Hold up a minute here—this debunks one of the arguments we hear so often for modern-day tithing. We're told that the ancient Jews were an agricultural society and therefore their grain, fruit, sheep, and cattle were what they used for money. We are then told that today we have a monetary society, and so we should tithe money. That sounds like a good argument, but look again at verse 25, which says to exchange the tithe for silver!

And here's the one that just blew my mind the first time I read it: Verse 26...

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. (NIV)

Did that say to spend the money on whatever you like? And did it seriously say “wine or other fermented drink?” Yup. And for those of you who are King James fans, this verse sounds even less holy when it says that you can spend it on “whatever thy soul lusteth after!” When's the last time you heard a church leader teach anything like this about tithing? It sounds blasphemous, but it's what the Bible says!

Finally verses 28 and 29 of Deuteronomy 14 say this:

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 aliens, 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.

Clearly, the tithe had nothing to do with 10% of a person's income. Nor was it monetary in nature. And if the tithe was exchanged for money (particularly silver), then it would be taken to Jerusalem and spent lavishly on anything you might need to throw a big party for your own household and the Levites you invited as guests. For that matter, every third year, the “tithe party” was held in your own hometown to feed all the widows, orphans, aliens, and Levites who lived locally.

“But what about the storehouses?” you ask. Didn't that verse from Malachi 3 say to “bring the whole tithe into the storehouse”? If all you do with the tithe is feast and party, what do you need a storehouse for?

Good questions, and these are all answered in 2 Chronicles 31. Here, Israel is returning to the Law of God, which they had been neglecting, and they reinstitute the tithe.

2 Chronicles 31:5-11—As soon as the order went out, the Israelites generously gave the firstfruits of their grain, new wine, oil and honey and all that the fields produced. They brought a great amount, a tithe of everything. ⁶ The men of Israel and Judah who lived in the towns of Judah also brought a tithe of their herds and flocks and a tithe of the holy things dedicated to the LORD their God, and they piled them in heaps. ⁷ They began doing this in the third month and finished in the seventh month. ⁸ When Hezekiah and his officials came and saw the heaps, they praised the LORD and blessed his people Israel.

⁹ Hezekiah asked the priests and Levites about the heaps; ¹⁰ and Azariah the chief priest, from the family of Zadok, answered, "Since the people began to bring their contributions to the temple of the LORD, we have had enough to eat and plenty to spare, because the LORD has blessed his people, and this great amount is left over."

¹¹ Hezekiah gave orders to prepare storerooms in the temple of the LORD, and this was done. (NIV)

So the storehouses didn't come into being until a time arrived when God had blessed His people so much that they and the Levites couldn't consume all of the tithe in one sitting! The "tithe party" was thrown, and all the leftovers were saved throughout the year to continue feeding the Levites.

So if you still want to stretch the Scripture to justify tithing today, then here's how we could make it work. Take every tenth dollar bill from your wallet no matter what value it has, and then use that money to throw a big party for your family. Invite all the pastors in your town. And if there's any money left over, put it in a bank account that all the pastors have access to.

Do you see why I said that the more you read about tithing, the less we see it applying to today's Church? Now here's the hard part for me to say because, as I said earlier, it is not my wish to drive a wedge between people and their churches. Again, chances are your local church has not been teaching these things in order to manipulate you, but rather because they believe it to be true. Usually, modern-day tithing is taught by well-intentioned people who are merely conveying a tradition that has been handed down to them. Nevertheless, the truth is the truth, and it needs to be pointed out. In the Bible, a tithe was something enjoyed by the person giving it, and they let the people from the tribe of Levi participate because they had no inheritance. To suggest that we must give 10% of our income to a nonprofit organization because "the Bible says we must do it" is simply not true. The Bible says no such thing.

In this way, we have invented artificial commandments that are not at all required of us in the Word of God. And by doing so, we are bringing judgment on ourselves.

Mark 7:6-13—[Jesus] replied, "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written:

" These people honor me with their lips,
but their hearts are far from me.

⁷They worship me in vain;
their teachings are but rules taught by men.'

⁸You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men."

⁹And he said to them: "You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions! ¹⁰For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.' ¹¹But you say that if a man says to his father or mother: 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is Corban' (that is, a gift devoted to God), ¹²then you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother. ¹³Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that." (NIV)

So according to Jesus, if we are spending our money on “a gift devoted to God” when we should be using it for the responsibilities God has placed in our care, then we are nullifying the word of God with a mere tradition! If you’re being told to tithe at the expense of caring for your family, then don’t do it. To carry out a tradition at the expense of obeying God nullifies His word! Enough said.

By now, we’ve seen what the Law of Moses has to say about tithing. But there are many people who argue—as we said in the beginning—that since Jacob tithed, we can say that tithing came before the Law of Moses and is therefore not a law at all. Many preachers today use this argument to say that “tithing is a spiritual principle that transcends the law.”

Sorry—tithing is still a matter of the law. Here’s why I can say that with confidence: Also long before the Law of Moses, Abraham practiced circumcision, and *this* is considered a matter of law. If circumcision started before the Law was given to Moses and is still considered a law that no longer applies, then tithing—which also came before Moses—is also a law that no longer applies. We’ll also see in a little bit that ***Jesus Himself*** called tithing a matter of the law. For now, let’s see what the New Testament has to say about *circumcision* and the law:

Romans 2:27-29—The one who is not circumcised physically and yet obeys the law will condemn you who, even though you have the written code and circumcision, are a lawbreaker.

²⁸A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. ²⁹No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man’s praise is not from men, but from God. (NIV)

Romans 7:6—But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code. (NIV)

What is it that makes a law a law? It is something we are required to do out of obedience and obligation; and if we break that command, we will be judged accordingly. Jesus, however, cancelled the written code of law:

Colossians 2:13-17—When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, ¹⁴having canceled the written code, with its regulations,

that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

¹⁶Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. ¹⁷These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. (NIV)

All religious practices and every biblical law are merely shadows of Jesus Christ. He is the substance. When someone is about to walk around a corner with the sun to their back, you might look at their emerging shadow to try figuring out who they are. But as soon as they round that corner, you no longer look at their shadow! You look at their face! Now that Jesus has come and purchased our freedom from the Law, we have no reason to keep looking at His shadow! Now all we need to do is love Him and seek to enhance our relationship with Him on a daily basis. Jesus said “If you love me, you will obey my commands.” Love comes first; obedience is the result. In this way, Jesus fulfilled the Law because all we have to do is look to Him and we will supernaturally meet all the requirements of the Law as a result!

But by fulfilling the Law, Jesus was also able to establish a much higher standard than what the Law required. A living person is far more engaging than their shadow! Consider these words of Christ:

Matthew 5:17-48—“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. ¹⁸I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. ¹⁹Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

²¹“You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ ²²But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.

²³“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.

²⁵“Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. ²⁶I tell you the truth, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

²⁷“You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery.’ ²⁸But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. ³⁰And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and

throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

³¹“It has been said, ‘Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.’ ³²But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery.

³³“Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord.’ ³⁴But I tell you, Do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God’s throne; ³⁵or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. ³⁶And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. ³⁷Simply let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

³⁸“You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ ³⁹But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. ⁴⁰And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. ⁴¹If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. ⁴²Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

⁴³“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. ⁴⁶If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? ⁴⁷And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? ⁴⁸Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

The law still exists, but it takes on a completely new form in Christ. Rather than doing what is natural for humans—to repay an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth—Jesus tells us that we are invited to do what is unnatural—or supernatural—like turning the other cheek, loving our enemies, or giving more than is asked of us. He tells us that we need to be PERFECT with the same perfection of our Father in heaven!

The law was impossible to fulfill before Christ; but by fulfilling it, He has significantly raised the bar! The reason is that Jesus Christ set a new standard. Instead of following the Law, we are now to follow Christ. We are supposed to imitate Him and walk as He walked. He is the way, truth, and life. The Law is only obsolete in that our new God-given Example far surpasses anything the Law ever required. Jesus meets and exceeds the Law of Moses. Jesus IS the New Covenant, and He reveals a far greater glory than that of the Old Covenant.

2 Corinthians 3:7-11—Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, fading though it was, ⁸will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious? ⁹If the ministry that condemns men is glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness! ¹⁰For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory. ¹¹And if what was fading away came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts! (NIV)

The magnitude of the New Covenant far outweighs that of the Old Covenant.

I therefore offer to you this thesis: **Under the Old Covenant, the Law required that 10% of all we had did not belong to us; under the New Covenant, however, Jesus requires something greater: that 100% of all we have does not belong to us.**

Jesus tells us in verse 20 of Matthew 5 that our righteousness must surpass that of the Pharisees and teachers of the Law. These people tithed:

Luke 11:42—“Woe to you Pharisees, because you give God a tenth of your mint, rue and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the love of God. You should have practiced the latter without leaving the former undone.

And Matthew reveals something deeper about the tithe:

Matthew 23:23—“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the *more important* matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former.

Did you catch that? According to Jesus, the tithe IS a matter of the Law! He said the Pharisees had tithed but neglected the “more important” matters of the Law, which means that tithing is a “*less important*” matter of the Law! Therefore, it has been cancelled for us who put our faith in Christ. Remember, He fulfills the Law! But remember also that by fulfilling the Law, Jesus holds us to a higher standard!

The only person Jesus ever lauded for their giving was the poor widow who did not give 10%:

Mark 12:41-44—Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. ⁴²But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny.

⁴³Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. ⁴⁴They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.” (NIV).

Pleasing Jesus Christ is not accomplished by giving 10% of anything. It is accomplished by giving 100% of all we have!

Now, this doesn't mean that we have to give 100% to the temple in Jerusalem or even to the Christian organizations we attend from week to week. It simply means that 100% of all you have is not your own—it belongs to God. That means that you do with it as the Spirit leads. If the Lord tells you to give 10% of your income to your church, then by all means do it! But don't do it out of obligation—do it because it is what the Lord is asking you to do with *His* money! For that matter, if He's not telling you to give 10%...or ANY percent...to a particular organization, then you are not breaking the law if you hold onto that money! As a matter of act, you are *obeying* God!

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

Tithing, as we teach it in our churches, compels us to give. And since we are under compulsion, we are often reluctant in our giving. By our teachings, we nullify the blessings that could be experienced by the giver AND by God. That's right, God is blessed by our giving, but only when it is done freely and without compulsion—He “loves” a cheerful giver! Rather than teaching tithing, we need to teach people to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit and continually seek Him for what to do with our finances. In this way, our giving becomes a joy rather than a chore or burden.

Once, the Lord told me not to spend or give any money for one month except for gasoline and bills. I didn't have a significant income, but at the end of the month, I had saved \$500. Then I got a letter in the mail from a pastor-friend of mine who was about to take a trip to Columbia for a month. This trip was vital to the birth of his new church, but he needed funds. The Holy Spirit promptly said to me, “There—that's why I had you save your money.” I wrote out a check for \$500 and stuck it in the mail. I thought nothing of it and didn't feel any loss because it was not my money in the first place! My role is to listen to the Holy Spirit and ask Him what He wants me to do with the measure of His finances that He has placed in my care!

Sometimes God requires that we give everything. It could be taken as boasting if I told you how many times I have emptied my bank account and given it all away simply out of obedience to the Lord, but I believe that I need to say this has been done so you can see that it's not impossible. In every case, the Lord was faithful to me and made sure I always had enough for my needs to be met.

I believe this would have happened in the case of the rich young ruler if he had only honored the request of Jesus:

Mark 10:17-30—As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. “Good teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

¹⁸“Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone. ¹⁹You know the commandments: ‘Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother.’”

²⁰“Teacher,” he declared, “all these I have kept since I was a boy.”

²¹Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

²²At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

²³Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!”

²⁴The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”

²⁶The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, “Who then can be saved?”

²⁷Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.”

²⁸Peter said to him, “We have left everything to follow you!”

²⁹“I tell you the truth,” Jesus replied, “no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel ³⁰will fail to receive a hundred times as much *in this present age* (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life...” (NIV)

Jesus promises that when we give 100% of all we have to God, then God will respond with 100 times the blessing—sometimes that is spiritual blessing, and sometimes it is physical blessing. It’s not a formula, and we should not give with an expectation of how the return will come. Take note of the different forms of blessing mentioned in the following passage:

2 Corinthians 9:6-15—Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. ⁷Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. ⁹As it is written:

“He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor;
his righteousness endures forever.”

¹⁰Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. ¹¹You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

¹²This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God’s people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. ¹³Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. ¹⁴And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. ¹⁵Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift! (NIV)

As you can see, giving money may bring financial blessing—or you may just reap a harvest of righteousness, as verse 10 points out. Just because you empty your bank account for the poor does not mean that in a few weeks your account will be 100 times bigger than it was before you gave. Part of loving God and having a relationship with Him involves having an attitude in which you are grateful no matter how He brings the return. If your focus is on the money, then you are an idolater.

This is where the teachings on tithing have taken their ugliest turn. If your mental wheels are spinning with pictures of fancy cars, a big house, and fistfuls of money, then you have completely missed the point. Such fantasies are nothing but materialism and greed. John the Baptist said that the man with two shirts should give one to the man who has no shirt. How much stricter of a standard are we Americans held to when we have closet-fuls of

clothing? We live in a materialistic culture, and prosperity theology appeals to our understanding of “the American Dream.”

It is true that God prospers people. It is also true that it is often related to that person’s generosity. But many prosperity teachers are notorious for teaching false doctrines like: “If you are not prospering, then you are in sin.” Thus, they beat down the poor. I say, “If the poor are not prospering, it’s because all the wealthy prosperity teachers are hoarding all the money!”

The Bible does not say that people are poor because they are in sin. If that were the case, then Jesus would have looked at that poor widow, shook His head, and said, “Look at that poor sinner. She wishes she could give more money like everyone else.” For that matter, Jesus Himself would have been considered a sinner by the prosperity teachers were He walking the earth today!

But no one can deny that Jesus gave 100% of all He had when He walked this earth. And no one can deny the power-packed results of that generosity and love for His Father.

Extravagant giving does not always result in a financial reward—many times the reward is spiritual in nature. Look at all the people throughout history who have taken a vow of poverty, and yet they have been some of the most influential people in the world—like Mother Teresa. She reminded us often that our lives are not measured by how *successful* we are—they are measured by how *faithful* we are. Yes, it is possible to reap financially, but this is not always the case.

Have you ever wondered why all the really amazing miracles these days seem to happen through missionaries in other countries while our own church meetings rarely see anything supernatural at all? I believe these missionaries are reaping the reward promised for someone who leaves everything for the sake of Jesus Christ and the Gospel! Many of these missionaries have given 100%, whereas our local Christians are only instructed to give 10%. Here’s the problem with that:

Luke 6:38—Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.” (NIV).

With the same measure with which we give, God’s reward is measured back to us. If we offer 10% of all we have to Him, then we should expect that He will respond with 10% of all that He has. If, however, we offer 100% of all we have to Him, then it should not shock us when He responds with 100% of all that He has! As we read in 2 Corinthians 9:6, “Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.”

It should not surprise us that by withholding 90% of our income from God, He would withhold 90% of His glory from us! God wants to pour forth 100%! We are His children, but we don’t understand what that means. As a child of God, we have *nothing* that does not already belong to Him—100% of all we own is already His whether we

realize it or not. And for that matter, He allows us to share in everything He has—this is our right as sons of God and joint-heirs with Christ.

In Luke 15, we read about two sons. The first son asked for his share of the inheritance and then went and squandered it. The second son remained at home with his father. When the first son finally came back home and repented of his wrongdoing, his father embraced him and threw a big party. This infuriated the second son who asked his father why *he* didn't get a party even though he had stayed at home. The father replied in verses 31 and 32: **“My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.”**

The first son's share of the inheritance was a mere percentage of all that his father had. And when the party was thrown, it too represented a mere percentage of all that the father owned. Neither son realized that if they had truly embraced their roles as sons, they could have shared in 100% of all that their father had! If we will truly embrace our roles as God's sons, then we too will see that “everything our Father has is ours!”

But as we learned from Jesus, the measure with which we receive is directly related to the measure with which we give. As soon as we accept that 100% of all we have belongs to God, He will prove to us that 100% of all He has belongs to us!

Again, this does not necessarily have anything to do with physical wealth, though such rewards are not out of the question. Rather, it has to do with spiritual reality. Why do you suppose the Church in the Book of Acts experienced so many miracles, signs, and wonders? Why do you think Peter's shadow could heal people? Why do you suppose the glory of God operated with such magnitude that people fell down dead when they outright disobeyed God? Why do you suppose they had dreams, visions, and angelic encounters all the time? I believe these disciples were receiving 100% of all God had to offer them! And it came because, first of all, they had received the Holy Spirit; and second of all, they regarded everything they had as being His!

Acts 2:42-47—They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. ⁴⁴All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵**Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.** ⁴⁶Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. (NIV)

Acts 4:32-35—All the believers were one in heart and mind. **No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own**, but they shared everything they had. ³³With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. ³⁴There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales ³⁵and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need. (NIV)

Do you see how each of these passages seem to link together the fact that miracles happened with the reality that “no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own”? I believe these are connected—not simply because it makes sense biblically, but also because I have seen personal proof of it! When we sow 100% to God, we are more likely to reap 100% FROM God!

The danger, however, is to start treating this “100% rule” like a law as well. It is important to be aware of the difference between Biblical Law and a spiritual law. Biblical Law consists of rules and regulations that must be followed in order to prove one’s righteousness. Such laws are circumcision, tithing, sacrifices, and the like. They are based on actions: if you do this, God will do this; or if you don’t do this, God will do that. Laws separate us from relationship with God and cause us to view Him like a magic genie who must honor our wishes because we rubbed the lamp the right way. Laws keep us from engaging God as a person and thus having a true friendship with Him.

A spiritual law, however, is more like a natural law (like the law of gravity). Spiritual laws are based on results—not actions. Such examples are righteousness (which is a spiritual law that requires all things to end in perfection, and works to that end); also humility (remember, pride goes before the fall, but God gives greater grace to the humble—this is not a Biblical Law, it is a spiritual law); and thirdly, sowing and reaping (which we described earlier). Just as natural laws like gravity dictate how the natural universe functions, so spiritual laws dictate how the spiritual aspects of the universe function.

The interesting thing about spiritual laws, though, is that Jesus Christ has complete control over them just like He has always had over natural laws (remember when He broke the law of gravity by walking on water and by ascending into heaven?). In the same way, He can manipulate spiritual laws.

For instance, consider the law of sowing and reaping—Jesus can cause you to be free from the adverse effects and subject to the good effects. In other words, if you sow in evil, you will reap evil—but if you repent, then Jesus can intervene and cut off the law of sowing and reaping in that case. Likewise, if you sow in kindness, then you may or may not reap in kindness—it depends on your relationship to God and what He needs to do to keep your eyes set on Him. Do you see how spiritual law is not cut-and-dry like Biblical Law is? Spiritual laws are spiritual realities that are enacted on us based on our relationship with God rather than our actions.

Deciding that 100% of all you have belongs to God does not assure you of anything. I cannot promise that you will have miracles in your life; although it is more likely. I cannot promise that you will be blessed with multiplied resources; although this too is more likely. If our focus is on the method rather than the Man Christ Jesus, then we have failed again.

Galatians 3:2-5—I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? ³Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by

human effort? ⁴Have you suffered so much for nothing—if it really was for nothing? ⁵Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard? (NIV)

God's grace supersedes all forms of law. He says "I will have mercy on anyone I wish, and I'll show compassion on anyone I wish." By relying on laws—whether we're talking about the 10% rule or the 100% rule—we rob God of His sovereignty and personhood. The fact is, *He can do absolutely anything!* We don't give Him 100% because it makes us more likely to receive 100% in blessings; we give 100% because He deserves it! We worship Him because He deserves it! We honor Him because He deserves it!

God does not deserve 10%—He deserves 100%!

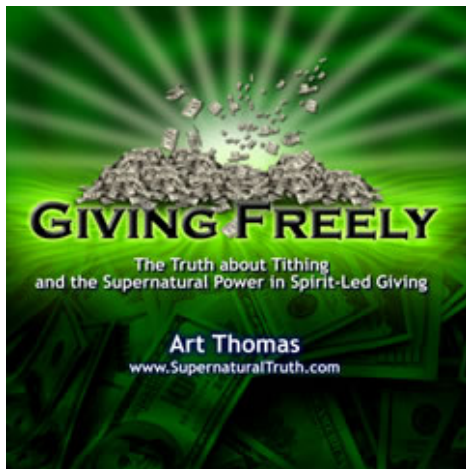
Father, open our eyes to the spiritual reality of all that you have done for us already. Help us to see tithing for what it really is—a ploy of the devil to keep Christ's Church powerless and focused on money. Set us free, Holy Spirit, from our greed and idolatry! Forgive us for our unbelief and misunderstanding about the tithe. Forgive us for encouraging one another to hold onto 90% of our resources and only surrender 10% to God. Forgive us for teaching the traditions of man as though they are the commandments of God. Forgive us for holding ourselves to one part of the Law, which makes us accountable to all of it! Father, we have condemned ourselves! Forgive us!

Jesus Christ, we rely on your sacrifice and grace. We know that You have purchased our salvation with Your own blood! We receive your grace and Your forgiveness. Thank you for restoring our relationship with our Father in Heaven.

And Holy Spirit, help us to maintain that relationship. Open our spiritual ears to hear Your promptings and guidance. We need to know where and how to spend our Father's resources.

Thank You, God, for your love and mercy! Thank you for welcoming us into relationship with You. We worship You! You are good and Your love for us endures forever and ever! Amen!

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