

## **Why Is Tithing Important and the Origins of Pro Bono Services**

Here's this past week's feature message (slightly revised):

I often use to wonder why the Bible encourages us to tithe. My first question was what to tithe, and the answer to this was not what I expected, it involves more than just money. We are to tithe three things in-particular: (1) our time, (2) our talent, and (3) our income. I didn't fully understand that until I was well into my thirties, and prior to that all I'd ever heard about tithing had to do with money (a tenth of what was earned).

But then, as I matured, the questions became (1) from which part of the source of our money are we to tithe (give to the church); and (2) what exactly is involved with tithing time and talent.

As for the first question, theologians seem to differ on whether we should give out of our gross, or out of our net income. As crazy as it may sound, I decided to give out of my gross, and not from the net, income. And since it's well-established that you cannot "outgive" the Lord, I decided to trust that even if I were making a mistake, the Lord Himself would see to my every need (and that He would even work any mistakes out for my good and for the good of my family).

I could be wrong, but I think that most people who tithe do so from their net income (from what's left over after taxes and other paycheck deductions). I think that's a mistake for several reasons, but I won't get into it right now. So I decided that if I were to err, I would do so on the side of generosity to the Lord, especially since that's what He does time and time-again on my behalf.

As for the second question, time & talent, I think it's very cool that lawyers are both required, and in most cases I've ever seen, actually want to perform some type or pro-bono work for clients who simply cannot afford justice. Our profession has many questionable (at best) characteristics & shortcomings, but this aspect of it is definitely not one of them.

Anyway, the requirement for tithing is found in at least two scriptures (Malachi 3:10, and Leviticus 27:30), but the reasoning for it seems to have been made pretty clear in 2 Chronicles 31:

### **2 Chronicles 31 (NIV)**

When all this had ended, the Israelites who were there went out to the towns of Judah, smashed the sacred stones and cut down the Asherah poles. They destroyed the high places and the altars throughout Judah and Benjamin and in Ephraim and Manasseh. After they had destroyed all of them, the Israelites returned to their own towns and to their own property.  
Contributions for Worship

<sup>2</sup> Hezekiah assigned the priests and Levites to divisions—each of them according to their duties as priests or Levites—to offer burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, to minister, to give thanks and to sing praises at the gates of the Lord's dwelling. <sup>3</sup> The king contributed from his own possessions for the morning and evening burnt offerings and for the burnt offerings on the Sabbaths, at the New Moons and at the appointed festivals as written in the Law of the Lord. <sup>4</sup> He ordered the people living in Jerusalem to give the portion due the priests and Levites so they could devote themselves to the Law of the Lord. <sup>5</sup> As soon as the order went out, the Israelites

generously gave the firstfruits of their grain, new wine, olive oil and honey and all that the fields produced. They brought a great amount, a tithe of everything. <sup>6</sup> The people 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. <sup>7</sup> They began doing this in the third month and finished in the seventh month. <sup>8</sup> When Hezekiah and his officials came and saw the heaps, they praised the Lord and blessed his people Israel.

<sup>9</sup> Hezekiah asked the priests and Levites about the heaps; <sup>10</sup> 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."

<sup>11</sup> Hezekiah gave orders to prepare storerooms in the temple of the Lord, and this was done.

<sup>12</sup> Then they faithfully brought in the contributions, tithes and dedicated gifts. Konaniah, a Levite, was the overseer in charge of these things, and his brother Shimei was next in rank. <sup>13</sup> Jehiel, Azariah, Nahath, Asahel, Jerimoth, Jozabad, Eliel, Ismakiah, Mahath and Benaiah were assistants of Konaniah and Shimei his brother. All these served by appointment of King Hezekiah and Azariah the official in charge of the temple of God.

<sup>14</sup> Kore son of Imnah the Levite, keeper of the East Gate, was in charge of the freewill offerings given to God, distributing the contributions made to the Lord and also the consecrated gifts.

<sup>15</sup> Eden, Miniamin, Jeshua, Shemaiah, Amariah and Shekaniah assisted him faithfully in the towns of the priests, distributing to their fellow priests according to their divisions, old and young alike.

<sup>16</sup> In addition, they distributed to the males three years old or more whose names were in the genealogical records—all who would enter the temple of the Lord to perform the daily duties of their various tasks, according to their responsibilities and their divisions. <sup>17</sup> And they distributed to the priests enrolled by their families in the genealogical records and likewise to the Levites twenty years old or more, according to their responsibilities and their divisions. <sup>18</sup> They included all the little ones, the wives, and the sons and daughters of the whole community listed in these genealogical records. For they were faithful in consecrating themselves.

<sup>19</sup> As for the priests, the descendants of Aaron, who lived on the farmlands around their towns or in any other towns, men were designated by name to distribute portions to every male among them and to all who were recorded in the genealogies of the Levites.

<sup>20</sup> This is what Hezekiah did throughout Judah, doing what was good and right and faithful before the Lord his God. <sup>21</sup> In everything that he undertook in the service of God's temple and in obedience to the law and the commands, he sought his God and worked wholeheartedly. And so he prospered.

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The way I read it is that tithes are to benefit the "House of the Lord", the Church, and the "Body of Christ", so that there will always be more than adequate resources to provide for anyone and everyone who do not have the resources to provide for themselves, and for those who, from time-to-time, find themselves in a "bind". And from time-to-time this can be any one of us, and/or our families.

Just imagine what an amazing world this would be if every last one of us gave according to this standard. We could eradicate poverty, injustice, etc. almost overnight (and I don't believe that's an exaggeration).

So tithe; test the Lord on this, just as it says to in Scripture, even if you don't believe you can afford to, and watch your blessings flow!

I hope you each have an incredibly blessed week!!!

- Jack