

Sunday, July 14, 2013

How to manage Tithes

Occasionally, I receive questions from people regarding how to **direct tithing contributions**. Is it appropriate to give our tithing money to a needy relative? Or should we send it to the poor in Egypt? Can we contribute tithing money to Sunday school ministry, publishing material, or church construction? Is it important that we bring offering every time we walk into church as the scriptures command that **we should not appear before Him empty-handed** (Exodus 23:15, 34:20).

I will try to address some thoughts regarding this topic in this article:

+ First, We must completely believe that tithe is not our money, rather it belongs to God who gives us everything abundantly. Tithe is His and if we take it to ourselves, we would be robbing God of what is His (Malachi, 3:8-9).

+ It is also important to believe that God is faithful and true to His promises, so He will open the heavens and overflow with bounty to those who commit themselves to offering tithes (Malachi 23:10).

+ If gift offering in the Old Testament was limited to tithing, it behooves us to elevate it in the New Testament at least by a small amount, remembering the words of Jesus regarding this, **“Unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.”** (Matthew 5:20)

+ God, through His grace, leaves it up to us to direct our tithing in the direction that we are most comfortable with. It is true that the commandment of the Old Testament regarding gift offering was dedicated to the Temple. It was meant to fulfill the needs of worship in the sanctuary, its priests, and Levites who are dedicated to worship and praise. However, in the New Testament, we see that wealthy followers of Christ generously offered money to fulfill the need of the ministry (Luke 8:3). There was a treasurer responsible for the money and fulfills the need of the poor during feasts. This expands the circle of tithing to include all charitable work and various aids to all people for the sake of Christ.

+ In my vision, I suggest a flexible system to distribute our tithing on regular basis in three directions:

First direction: Our local church where we pray.

This is the place that serves us, so we ought to contribute to its needs. Every church has various needs, regardless how wealthy it may seem to us. When we fill in those needs with our tithing, we bring blessings to our homes and children. In this direction we should put at least one-third of our tithing contributions.

Second Direction: Needy families in general, whether in Egypt or anywhere else. This includes any needy relatives or anyone that has special needs. This includes charitable organizations that care for orphans, widows, destitute and the homeless.

Third Direction: Emergency cases which we face on daily basis. For instance, a needy person or a family that God places them in our path, contributions to building or buying a church or a monastery, or supporting a ministry or mission work. It also includes contributing to some Sunday school needs, publishing spiritual material that serves preaching the Bible, etc. If we don't come across these opportunities of giving, then we distribute our tithing in the previous two directions.

Lastly, regarding regular tithing. It's better to be regular in offering tithing either monthly or biweekly or whatever regular cadence of income for each person. It would be a blessed nice habit to offer part of our tithing in the donation box every time we are present before God in church. What's more important though, is that we should not appear before God void of the spirit of repentance, reverence, and love.



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