

## Stewardship of God's Gifts: A Self-Study

### Topic #2: Why should I tithe to the Church?

*Return to me, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts. But you say, 'How shall we return?'* <sup>8</sup> *Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, 'How have we robbed you?'* *In your tithes and contributions.* <sup>9</sup> *You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you* (Mal 3:7-9). Tough words from the Lord here...failure to tithe and contribute is actually robbing from God! Even though this was true of Israel, and may even be true of us if we are mishandling our role in faithful stewardship, we do not make God poor when we fail to give properly. Instead, we make ourselves poor for we are not living in accordance with all that God has said is good and right for us. God does not need our money, but has asked us to give to Him in order that we may overcome the negative influence that money can have on us, and the tempting things it leads us to do. As Jesus says in Matthew 6:24, no one can serve two masters, especially God and money.

Some of the teachings of the Bible are not always the easiest for us to follow, especially those things that make us feel uncomfortable or seem to be outdated and antiquated. Money and its use is one such example of a topic that may make us feel uncomfortable. However, all that God says to us in his Word is for our good, and living by the Word and setting our worldview according to it helps us to see God's beautiful design and intent for us as His children. When it comes to money, Paul's words to Timothy help us understand that fact: ***Now there is great gain*** (wealth) ***in godliness with contentment*** (1 Tim. 6:6). Godliness and contentment is God's desire for you, and that is the desire of this congregation for you too. Consider the following passages in relation to your gifts of tithes and offerings:

1. *Read Haggai 2:8 & 1 Chronicles 29:14.* To whom does your money belong?
2. What five requirements does God make on every Christian when it comes to monetary offerings?
  - a. *Read 2 Corinthians 9:7.* The Lord desires for you to make your monetary offerings **willingly**.
  - b. *Read Proverbs 3:9-10.* The Lord desires for you to give of your monetary blessings **first**, not with whatever is left at the end of the month.
  - c. *Read 1 Corinthians 16:2.* The Lord desires for your monetary offerings to be made **regularly** ("on the first day of every week"), when you have income, whether you attend church or not.
  - d. *Read 1 Corinthians 16:2 again, as well as Deuteronomy 16:17 & Luke 12:48.* The amount of money you give is not what matters to God. His desire is that your offering be **proportionate** ("as he may prosper (*1 Cor*)"; "according to the blessing (*Deut*)") in relation to your income and investments.
  - e. *Read 1 Corinthians 8:1-4 & Luke 7:47.* The Lord finally desires that monetary offerings be made **generously**.

3. While stewardship does include more than just money (time & talents are usually spoken of as well), such things are never meant as a replacement for our monetary offerings. *Read 2 Corinthians 8:7 and Matthew 23:23.* What things are we called to do in the matter of stewardship? What are we to excel in?
4. A tithe is a literal 10% offering of what the Lord has blessed his children with. While no longer a command as it was in the Old Testament, God certainly would not desire for us to do less under the freedom of the Gospel. What does not change is God's promise in regards to tithing. *Read Malachi 3:10-11.* What does God promise to do and to give in response to faithful stewardship, especially the tithe?

Tithing is not something that will be easy – it requires sacrifice. It is also something that is not ingrained in us, rather it is a part of Christian life that must be worked on, just like prayer or regular study of God's Word or consistent church attendance. What is clear, though, is this: no one who has ever tried to tithe of their blessings has failed. It has never not worked. Is it easy to give up 10% of your income? No. Does it seem like too much, and that there won't be enough for you live on? Maybe. But through careful exploration of areas that you could sacrifice in your daily life, and by prayer and guidance of the Holy Spirit, giving a tithe can not only become a faithful response to God's activity in your life, but also can become something done gladly and cheerfully, in godliness with contentment. And as you read in Malachi, the Lord promises to give us blessings that far outshine the difficulty of the gift. But, blessings are not our motivation to tithe. Instead, it is the amazing love that God has shown us in Christ, and what we have been made to become – children of the Heavenly Father forever. Two words from St. Paul seem appropriate then: ***It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me*** (Galatians 2:20)... ***he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised*** (2 Corinthians 5:15). It is Christ who lives in us, and enables us to do all things that we may have life in Him!