

# Tithes, Offerings, and Giving to God



By Britt Gillette

Recently, our family decided to get serious about directing a set portion of our [monthly income](#) toward God's purposes. This is an idea based on the [Old Testament](#) concept of tithing:

"Should people cheat God? Yet you have cheated me! 'But you ask, 'What do you mean? When did we ever cheat you?' 'You have cheated me of the [tithes and offerings](#) due to me. You are under a curse, for your whole nation has been cheating me. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so there will be enough food in my Temple. If you do,' says [the Lord](#) of Heaven's Armies, 'I will open [the windows](#) of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won't have enough room to take it in! Try it! Put me to the test!'" [Malachi 3:8-11 \(NLT\)](#)

Old Testament law required some Israelites to give the first 10% of their crops or every tenth animal if they raised cattle to various purposes, including support of the Levites, the Temple priests, and [the poor](#).

But tithing is an Old Testament law applicable to the Israelites. The blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ, exempts today's believers from Old Testament rules and regulations such as tithing. Nevertheless, we're still expected to have giving hearts...

"You say you have faith, for you believe that there is one God. Good for you! Even the demons believe this, and they tremble in terror. How foolish! Can't you see that faith without good deeds is useless?" [James 2: 19-20 \(NLT\)](#)

This doesn't mean that faith itself is worthless, or that [good deeds](#) are a necessary component of salvation. What it does mean is that true faith will give rise to a loving heart and a life overflowing with good works. True love for God doesn't manifest itself in a perceived obligation to give, but in a zealous willingness to give:

"Remember this - a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop. You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. 'For God loves a person who gives cheerfully.' And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others." [2 Corinthians 9:6-8 \(NLT\)](#)

For the true believer, giving in honor of God is its own reward. It doesn't come from a sense of obligation.

So if a believer chooses to cheerfully give to others in honor of God, where should he direct his efforts?

That's a good question, and one I set out to find an answer for.

The bible has a lot to say on the subject, and this article is more of a starting point than a definitive study. But here's a few places where you might want to consider directing your gift offerings...

## **Giving to the Poor**

Giving to the poor is one way to honor God with our gifts:

“If you help the poor, you are [lending](#) to the Lord - and he will repay you!” [Proverbs 19:17 \(NLT\)](#)

According to the bible, giving help to the poor is the same as giving help to God Himself and such good deeds will not be forgotten...

“As the Scriptures say, ‘They share freely and give generously to the poor. Their good deeds will be remembered forever.’” [2 Corinthians 9:9 \(NLT\)](#)

## **Giving to the Hungry**

The bible also sanctions giving to the hungry. As this passage suggests, the early Christians were very giving in their donations to famine victims:

“During this time some prophets traveled from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them named Agabus stood up in one of the meetings and predicted by the Spirit that a great famine was coming upon the entire Roman world. (This was fulfilled during the reign of Claudius.) So the believers in Antioch decided to send relief to the brothers and sisters in Judea, everyone giving as much as they could. This they did, entrusting their gifts to Barnabas and Saul to take to the elders of [the church](#) in Jerusalem.” [Acts 11:27-30 \(NLT\)](#)

While mankind can not live off of bread alone, people still need food. And a charitable Christian acts as God’s ambassador, bringing the Good News of Christ to the poor through the example of a personal act of generosity.

## **Giving to Those in Need**

In addition to the poor and the hungry, we should, as a general rule, give to those in need:

“When God’s people are in need, be ready to help them. Always be eager to practice hospitality.” [Romans 12:13 \(NLT\)](#)

“Sell your possessions and give to those in need. This will store up treasure for you in heaven!” [Luke 12:33 \(NLT\)](#)

As Job points out, a refusal to help those in need can be indicative of a hardened and self-consumed heart. But God’s Judgment will be lighter on those who are empathetic and generous: “Have I refused to help the poor, or crushed the hopes of widows? Have I been stingy with my food and refused to share it with orphans? No, from childhood I have cared for orphans like a father, and all my life I have cared for widows. Whenever I saw the homeless without clothes and the needy with nothing to wear, did they not praise me for providing wool clothing to keep them warm? If I raised my hand against an orphan, knowing the judges would take my side, then let my shoulder be wrenched out of place! Let my arm be torn from its socket! That would be better than facing God’s judgment. For if the majesty of God opposes me, what hope is there?” [Job 31:16-23 \(NLT\)](#)

Some early Christians willingly gave of their own possessions to help fellow Christians in need, and God’s blessing was upon them all:

"All the believers were united in heart and mind. And they felt that what they owned was not their own, so they shared everything they had. The apostles testified powerfully to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and God's great blessing was upon them all. There were no needy people among them, because those who owned land or houses would sell them and bring the money to the apostles to give to those in need." [Acts 4:32-35 \(NLT\)](#)

So giving to those in need, especially fellow Christians in need, is one place where you can direct your gift offerings in honor of God.

### **Giving to Your Own Household**

Of course, all giving must start in your own household. As Jesus points out, zero tolerance legalism is no excuse for abandoning responsibility for your own family:

"But you say it is all right for people to say to their parents, 'Sorry, I can't help you. For I have vowed to give to God what I would have given to you.' In this way, you say they don't need to honor their parents. And so you cancel the word of God for the sake of your own tradition. You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you, for he wrote, 'These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship is a farce, for they teach man-made ideas as commands from God.'" [Matthew 15:5-9 \(NLT\)](#)

And as Paul states, Christian love and compassion begins in the home:

"But those who won't care for their relatives, especially those in their own household, have denied the true faith. Such people are worse than unbelievers." [1 Timothy 5:8 \(NLT\)](#)

And... "If a woman who is a believer has relatives who are widows, she must take care of them and not put the responsibility on the church. Then the church can care for the widows who are truly alone." [1 Timothy 5:16 \(NLT\)](#)

So if you're wondering where God wants you to direct your gift offerings, one place to start looking is those within your own family...

### **Giving to Spread the Gospel**

God also wants us to give of our resources to help those who preach and teach the Gospel of our Lord. Hard work should be adequately compensated, and being a faithful teacher and preacher of the Word of God is hard work:

"Those who are taught the word of God should provide for their teachers, sharing [all good things](#) with them." [Galatians 6:6 \(NLT\)](#)

As Paul states, those who preach the Good News of Jesus Christ should be supported just as those who worked in the Temple were supported by the Old Testament Israelites:

"Don't you realize that those who work in the temple get their meals from the offerings brought to the temple? And those who serve at the altar get a share of the sacrificial offerings. In the same way, the Lord ordered that those who preach the Good News should be supported by those who benefit from it." [1 Corinthians 9:13-14 \(NLT\)](#)

The Old Testament Temple workers were supported by the tithes and gift offerings of those who benefited from use of the Temple. Likewise, those who benefit from hearing the Gospel of Jesus Christ should support those who help spread it:

“Elders who do their work well should be respected and paid well, especially those who work hard at both preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, ‘You must not muzzle an ox to keep it from eating as it treads out the grain.’ And in another place, ‘Those who work deserve their pay!’” [1 Timothy 5:17-18 \(NLT\)](#)

Preaching the Word of God is real work, no different than the work of a day laborer who toils in the field. This work should be respected and supported.

Again, Paul sheds light on the subject:

“As you know, you Philippians were the only ones who gave me financial help when I first brought you the Good News and then traveled on from Macedonia. No other church did this. Even when I was in Thessalonica you sent help more than once. I don’t say this because I want a gift from you. Rather, I want you to receive a reward for your kindness. At the moment I have all I need - and more! I am generously supplied with the gifts you sent me with Epaphroditus. They are a sweet-smelling sacrifice that is acceptable and pleasing to God. And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus.” [Philippians 4:15-19 \(NLT\)](#)

“Was I wrong when I humbled myself and honored you by preaching God’s Good News to you without expecting anything in return? I ‘robbed’ other churches by accepting their contributions so I could serve you at no cost. And when I was with you and didn’t have enough to live on, I did not become a financial burden to anyone. For the brothers who came from Macedonia brought me all that I needed. I have never been a burden to you, and I never will be.” [2 Corinthians 11:7-9 \(NLT\)](#)

What could be more precious and life enriching than the Word of God? It’s more valuable than all the food and gold and silver and riches of the world. Yet many of us will eagerly pay the merchant in full and on time, while denying champions of God adequate provision for food, clothing, and shelter. Why?

God wants us to give in many ways, and one of the most important is giving in order to spread the Gospel.

### **Giving as the Holy Spirit Compels You**

Does giving to spread the Gospel mean that Christians should lavish money on local church organizations, local preachers, or televangelists?

No. Not necessarily.

There’s a great distinction between [the world’s idea of “the church”](#) and [the true body of Christ](#).

Remember, the Apostle Paul did not preach from the pulpit of a fixed point brick-and-mortar building in 30 minute increments one day a week. He was a man without a home - a vagabond traveler who preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all who would listen.

Supporting the spreading of the Gospel doesn’t necessarily mean we should give 10% of our weekly earnings to our local church minister (no matter how much our local church ministers would like to convince us otherwise). There are many ways to support the Gospel of Christ through gift offerings of prayer and service and money given to missionaries, itinerant preachers, and others. Some of the best ministries in the world are headquartered on the

Internet - sites like [Rapture Ready](#), [Rapture Alert](#), [Prophezine](#), and others.

We're encouraged to give as we're moved by the Holy Spirit... "Then these righteous ones will reply, 'Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing? When did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you?' 'And the King will say, 'I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!'" [Matthew 25:37-40 \(NLT\)](#)

As such, giving should not be confined to the local chapter of the Red Cross or the local bricks-and-mortar church. It's much more personal. Giving, as directed by the Holy Spirit, is a one-on-one experience. Human being to human being, with God acting as the connecting presence in between.

The presence of the Holy Spirit produces a well-spring of love and compassion that should compel us to give to those in need, to give eagerly of our own free will...

### **God Wants Us to Give of Our Own Free Will**

Because God has given us so much through the gift of salvation, purchased with the blood of Jesus Christ, our joyous gratitude should produce an abundance of generosity toward others...

"Now I want you to know, dear brothers and sisters, what God in his kindness has done through the churches in Macedonia. They are being tested by many troubles, and they are very poor. But they are also filled with abundant joy, which has overflowed in rich generosity. For I can testify that they gave not only what they could afford, but far more. And they did it of their own free will. They begged us again and again for the privilege of sharing in the gift for the believers in Jerusalem. They even did more than we had hoped, for their first action was to give themselves to the Lord and to us, just as God wanted them to do. So we have urged Titus, who encouraged your giving in the first place, to return to you and encourage you to finish this ministry of giving. Since you excel in so many ways - in your faith, your gifted speakers, your knowledge, your enthusiasm, and your love from us - I want you to excel also in this gracious act of giving." [2 Corinthians 8:1-7 \(NLT\)](#)

If you're blessed with great monetary riches, you should use your wealth to further God's purposes as directed by the Holy Spirit. Put your trust in God, not money. Use your abundance and position of strength to help others, to be generous to those in need:

"Teach those who are rich in this world not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which is so unreliable. Their trust should be in God, who richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment. Tell them to use their money to do good. They should be rich in good works and generous to those in need, always being ready to share with others. By doing this they will be storing up their treasure as a good foundation for the future so that they may experience true life." [1 Timothy 6:17-19 \(NLT\)](#)

Remember always that the wealth of this world is fleeting, but the riches of God are forever. For how you allocate your resources and where you direct your gifts in this world will determine your position in the next:

"If you are faithful in little things, you will be faithful in large ones. But if you are dishonest in little things, you won't be honest with greater responsibilities. And if you are untrustworthy about worldly wealth, who will trust you with the true riches of heaven?" [Luke 16:10-11 \(NLT\)](#)  
And it doesn't matter how much you give, but how much you give relative to your ability...

"Jesus sat down near the collection box in the Temple and watched as the crowds dropped in their money. Many rich people put in large amounts. Then a poor widow came and dropped in two small coins. Jesus called his disciples to him and said, 'I tell you the truth, this poor widow has given more than all the others who are making contributions. For they gave a tiny part of their surplus, but she, poor as she is, has given everything she had to live on.'" [Mark 12:41-44 \(NLT\)](#)

That said, you should always give willingly, not out of a sense of obligation. In the end, God will reward us all accordingly...

"Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full - pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back." [Luke 6:38 \(NLT\)](#)

### **Don't Call Attention to Your Gift Offerings**

One final note...

When giving for God's purpose, beware of your human pride. For many have fallen into the trap of giving in order to receive human praise for what they have done. As Jesus says, such people have already received their reward - fleeting and worthless human praise...

"Watch out! Don't do your good deeds publicly, to be admired by others, for you will lose the reward from your Father in heaven. When you give to someone in need, don't do as the hypocrites do - blowing trumpets in the synagogues and streets to call attention to their acts of charity! I tell you the truth, they have received all the reward they will ever get. But when you give to someone in need, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. Give your gifts in private, and your Father, who sees everything, will reward you." [Matthew 6:1-4 \(NLT\)](#)

So when you give, it's best to do so in secret, if possible. Then, only God will know your good deed, and your only motive is praise from God - a valuable and everlasting reward!

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