

# Stewardship

Inspiring a deeper understanding of true giving

***Tithing: A Leap of Faith!***

*Bible Studies*

## Tithing: A Leap of Faith! Bible Study

### *Whose Money Is It Anyway?*

**Prayer:** Dear good and gracious heavenly Father, you call us to live lives of gratitude, yet we are prone to take for granted all of our wonderful blessings. You call us to be faithful, but our days are filled with doubt and anxiety. You call us to be generous, but we respond with closed fists. Lord, forgive us and enable us to be faithful and generous with the blessings that you entrust to us. Give us hearts that are filled with thankfulness, faith, and generosity. In your precious name we pray. **Amen.**

#### **Purpose of Study:**

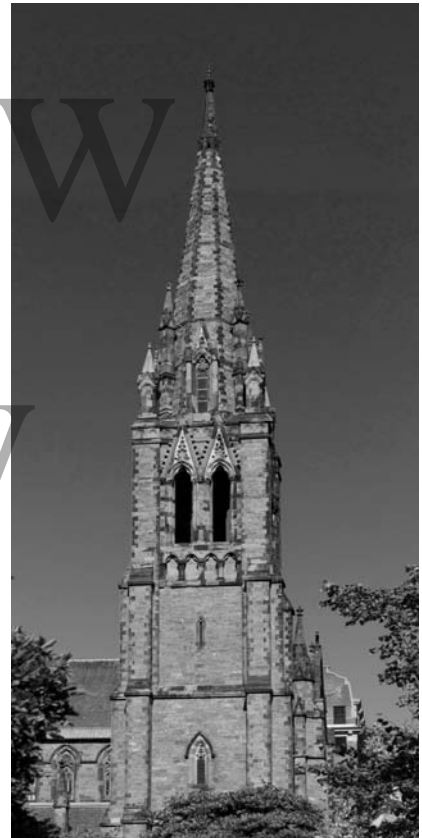
This study will help us understand or reinforce our understanding that...

- ✠ God is the creator and source of all things.
- ✠ Through our giving we are returning to God what he has already given to us.
- ✠ We are stewards of God's gifts.

#### **God Is the Source**

It is so easy for us to have the attitude that we, rather than God, own the things we possess. After all, didn't our hard work and sweat make it possible for us to acquire all that we have? Since our names are on the titles of our cars and houses, doesn't that mean that we own those things? Only through God's gift of faith are we able to understand and accept the words of Psalm 24:1: *"The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it."* As King David said in his prayer: *"Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand"* (1 Chronicles 29:14). We read in Haggai, *"The silver is mine and the gold is mine," declares the Lord almighty* (Haggai 2:8). Our attitudes and actions notwithstanding, God is the creator and owner of all. As stewards, we merely manage what he entrusts to us. God has not relinquished his ownership.

While still retaining his ownership, God has given us the ability to acquire and possess many things. Moses reminded the Israelites of this reality: *"You may say to yourself, 'My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.' But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today"* (Deuteronomy 8:17-18). Along with all his gifts, including our bodies and our intelligence, God adds to them our desire and ability to work. It is only by God's grace that we possess anything.



\$10,000. However, what is the determining factor as to what is acceptable to God? Is it that we tithe? Is it the amount we give? Paul tells us that our willingness is what matters to God. If you begrudgingly part with your money, ask God to change your heart.

**Sacrificial Giving:** One of the greatest examples of giving beyond one's means comes to us by way of Paul's letter to the Corinthians. He commends the Macedonian Christians as he writes, "*Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints*" (2 Corinthians 8:2-4). These Christians were not just looking out for themselves but, in spite of their own need, gave to others whom they considered to be in greater need. Verses 1 and 5 give us the secret of the Macedonians' generosity. Paul introduces this account by writing, "*We want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches.*" Apart from God's grace, our giving is fruitless. And in verse 5 we read, "*And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will.*" Giving of ourselves to the Lord must precede the giving of our resources. Giving because we are his children brings us "*overflowing joy.*"



For many tithers, giving is sacrificial. Perhaps the gift is not as sacrificial as the poor widow Christ commended (Luke 21:1-4), but in many cases giving one tenth of one's income is a sacrifice. Although it may seem impossible to make do on 90 percent of our incomes, it is done by many people. If we take a leap of faith and begin to tithe, God will provide.

**Regular giving:** Paul wrote, "*On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income . . .*" (1 Corinthians 16:2). In both the Old and New Testaments, God asks for disciplined and regular giving. Paul directs us to give on the first day; however, some of us may find it more convenient to give every two weeks or monthly. As frequently as we receive our incomes, our gifts should be made as part of our worship of the Lord. Tithers give regularly from their incomes.

## Is God Calling You to Tithe?

The portion of your income that you give to the Lord is between you and him. As you spend time reading God's Word and in prayer seeking his guidance, he will guide you in what you can and should give. Your spiritual maturity and your financial situation are major determinants in deciding what you give. Because God knows your spiritual and financial situations, he will not call upon you to give more than you can handle.

Every month you dispassionately make those payments for the mortgage, the car loan, the utility and cable and other bills. If tithing is simply a financial decision, you may consider it a bill just like other bills. Certainly it is commendable that you're making a regular proportionate, perhaps even

sacrificial gift, but if your heart is not involved, it is empty giving. Others may benefit but you won't.

That's why we say giving is more a spiritual decision than a financial one. God wants you before he wants your gift. God loves a cheerful giver and *"And [he] 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"* (2 Corinthians 9:7-8).

### Questions for Discussion:

5. Why is faith a bigger factor in your giving than your financial condition?
6. It has been said that tithing is a spiritual discipline that helps you stay connected to the Lord. How?
7. Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-7. Why were the Macedonians able to give so generously? What does it mean to give yourself to the Lord?
8. Read Proverbs 3:9-10; Malachi 3:10; Luke 6:38; 2 Corinthians 9:6. What does God promise to those who give to him faithfully and generously? What can we expect to "reap"?
9. What do these giving truths direct you to do?
  - ✦ Make giving a priority.
  - ✦ Give proportionately.
  - ✦ Give sacrificially.
  - ✦ Give regularly.
10. Should you give more or less under grace than under the Law? Why?
11. In what ways do your spending and giving reflect your values?
12. Are you willing to accept the tithe as a benchmark for your giving?

**Prayer:** Lord, we thank you for this study and the opportunity to grow in your Word as it applies to our giving. Help us to commit our lives and resources to serve and honor you. Grant us faith to believe that you will provide for us and faith that empowers us to seek your will for our lives. In your name we pray. **Amen.**