

## Paradise Lost and Restored: What is Giving/Tithing? (Part 4)

Ricardo Campos, Pastor Grace Chapel, Orange, CA November 2, 2014

### I. Introduction

Do you ever feel guilty that you're not giving enough money to God? Or maybe you're living on a tight budget and you don't have much to give. If this is the case, do you ever feel embarrassed about the amount you drop in the offering box? Is there a way to know how much we're supposed to give to God so that we don't feel guilty or embarrassed?

### II. Giving in the New Testament: *How Much Should You Give?*

**So how much should I give?** As we've seen from the Old Testament passages on giving, 10% is not what God requires of us today. Why? Because it wasn't just 10%. Averaged out, it was 23.3%. But this 23.3% didn't go to God, it went to the people: 10% for the Levites, another 10% for the people to celebrate the annual festivals, and every third year another 10% for the poor. Giving today is also voluntary (which was also available in the Old Testament, e.g., Exodus 25:1-2). In fact, the amount you give to God doesn't really matter to Him. You can give millions or pennies and God is just as pleased. What He cares about is your attitude: how you give and why you give; the amount simply reflects your heart.

*If you're wealthy, here's what God says to you, 1 Corinthians 16:2*, those who are wealthy and know they're supposed to give back to God, sometimes struggle with guilt. The more money they have, the greater the guilt. They constantly wonder, "Did I give enough?" If this is you, God will ease your mind if you follow one of His principles: give according to how much God has given you, 1 Corinthians 16:2. When Paul urges the Corinthians to help their suffering Jewish brethren, he tells them to give according to how much God has blessed them. Therefore, if God has blessed you with much, give much. If He's blessed you with little, then give little. When you start to give this way, something incredible happens. Even when God blesses you with little, you'll want to give more. Why? Because this principle will take your focus off of how much you give to how much God has blessed you and when you focus on that, it makes you want to give God more.

*If you're stingy, here's what God says to you, 2 Corinthians 9:6*, sometimes people have a hard time letting go of their money. They may've grown up poor, so they watch every penny even though they're far from being poor. Or perhaps they were raised by financially irresponsible parents and there was never enough money to cover the bills. Whatever the reason, God wants us to understand something, if we sow little, we'll get little. But if we sow much, we'll get much, 2 Corinthians 9:6. That is, if you give little, then you'll get little. And if you give much, then you'll get much. "So if I give more, I'll get more! Awesome!!" No, God is not a genie that if you rub the right way, you'll get a pile of cash. But if God does work this way, what does He mean that He'll give you more if you give Him more?

God doesn't give to people who hoard it for themselves, He gives to those who will give it to others. This is Paul's point in 2 Corinthians 9:8-10 where he quotes Psalm 112:9—the "He" is not a reference to God, but the righteous individual who gives generously from what God has given him. Therefore, if you give much of what God has given you, He'll give you more.

*If you're poor, here's what God says to you, Mark 12:41-44*, some people feel bad because they can't give much. In fact, they're embarrassed to give because they think it's so little. But God actually loves it when the poor give to Him. In fact, sometimes He considers what the poor give more than what the rich give. We see this truth play out in Mark 12:41-44. Jesus is watching the people give their money to God. He sees many rich folks, one after the other, drop a lot of money in the treasury. In the midst of all these rich folks, a widow steps forward and puts in two tiny coins. Then Jesus makes an astounding statement, "Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than **all** those who have given to the treasury." Jesus is saying that God counts the widow's penny more than the million dollars given by the rich. Why? Because God doesn't care about the amount; He cares about the motive behind the amount. The rich gave "out of their abundance" but the widow gave everything she owned. The rich would have to empty all their bank accounts, sell all their investments, and give it all to God to equal what the widow did.

**Since God doesn't care about the amount, can I just give Him \$10 every Sunday?**

Well, you have to ask yourself, "Will this \$10.00 honor God? Am I giving according to how much He's blessed me? Is this the last \$10.00 I have?" If the answer is "yes," awesome! Give God the \$10.00 and know that you've honored Him. But if the answer is "no," then you need to ask yourself why you're not willing to give Him more.

III. Giving in the New Testament: *Who Should You Give To?*

**What God gives you is to be shared with others**, we're supposed to live in community with each other. And when God gives us something, He wants us to share it. If someone is lacking something we have, God wants us to supply their need, 2 Corinthians 8:13-15. If we live this way towards each other, the one you help today may supply your need tomorrow.

**Who can you give to?** You can and should give to individuals in need, James 2:15-16 (cf. 1 John 3:17). You can and should give to the Church, which includes giving to any ministry dedicated to the Gospel of Christ, 1 Corinthians 9:7-14 (cf. 1 Timothy 5:17-18).

**How do I apply all this?** If you've been blessed by God financially but you haven't honored Him properly, start to increase what you give back to him until you reach an amount that honors Him according to how much He's blessed you. If you haven't honored God financially because you're overly frugal, ask a trusted individual to help you overcome your struggle of not letting go of your money. And once God frees you and gives you a spirit of generosity, honor Him with your money. If you don't have much to give to God, don't ever feel embarrassed. Remember that God loves it when the poor give to Him.

IV. Conclusion

*So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood."*