

“Tithing – What’s that?”

There once was a bank manager in a city here in South Carolina, and one day a man and his wife came in to the bank to open a couple of accounts. The bank manager asked if the man and his wife were new in town, and the husband responded, “Well, I am a newly appointed District Superintendent in the United Methodist Church here in South Carolina, and this is our new home.”

The bank manager responded, “Well, how about that. I am the Church Council chairperson at the First United Methodist church here in town! So, what kind of accounts do you want to open?” The District Superintendent replied, “Well, I want to open a regular checking account for me and my wife, and we want another account set up for our tithe.”

The Bank Manager looked at the District Superintendent kind of funny and asked, “What’s a tithe, and how do you spell it?” The District Superintendent was shocked that he was talking to a leader of the church and yet, this man had no idea what a tithe was.

The District Superintendent replied, “A tithe (T-I-T-H-E) is the first 10% of my income that I give back to God. And since I am a District Superintendent, I like to share my tithe with the seventy-some churches I am responsible for.”

I personally did not know anything about God’s commands concerning tithing until I was in my mid-twenties. It was then that a guest pastor came to preach at my home church on the biblical standard, and spiritual discipline, of tithing. I also had no idea that our Lord Jesus talked more about money than any other subject in the Bible.

Not only that, almost every parable Jesus ever told had something to do with a person’s possessions. In fact, Jesus said over and over, (and

this is my interpretation of what Jesus said). He said, “If you really want to measure your commitment to God, show me your bank statement. Because where you spend your money is where your true commitment lies.”

Jesus also said, “Listen you rich people, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than it is for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.” Now, every one of us here today is a rich person, that is, according to the world’s standards. We have much more than many others in our world. So, if it’s easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than it is for a rich person to enter the kingdom of Heaven, how in the world do we enter it?

One day, the offering plate was being passed during the worship service at church. Little Jimmy was sitting by his father and when the offering plate came by, little Jimmy pulled off his tie, and he threw it into the offering plate. Jimmy’s dad asked, “What in the world did you do that for?” Jimmy replied, “Well, the preacher just said, “It is now time to collect the tie’s and offerings of God’s people.” “No Son!” the father chided, “not tie! Tithe!”

So, what is a tithe – T-I-T-H-E?

Well, there are four things that a tithe is not!

One thing a tithe is not is works righteousness. We don’t tithe to gain more of God’s favor and earn, or work, our way into the kingdom of heaven. Our relationship with God, and our entrance into God’s kingdom, is not based on anything we give, or do. It is based on God’s grace – God’s favor, and our faith in Christ’s death and resurrection on our behalf. You can tithe all your life, but if your heart is not right with God by faith, you will not enter God’s kingdom!

The second thing a tithe is not is just any amount of money we decide to give. Some folks say, “This is my tithe”, and what they are referring to is whatever amount of money they just happen to have in their pocket at the time. A tithe is a specific amount of money that is dedicated to God.

The third thing a tithe is not is a plan to become wealthy, because some folks say, “You know, the more I give to God, the more God will bless me, and I will have plenty of money!” You can watch TV any day of the week and hear some prosperity preacher claiming that if you send a certain amount of money to their ministry, God is going to bless you financially.

God does bless some folks financially, however, our motivation to tithe should never be based on the thought that it will make us independently wealthy.

The fourth thing tithing is not is the church’s financial plan to help make sure the church’s financial needs are being supported. The church did not dream up tithing to make sure it’s financial needs in the budget are met. Tithing is God’s idea!

So, there are 4 things that tithing is not.

Now, let me share with you 5 concepts from God’s word that teach us what a tithe is.

The first is that a tithe is a precept. A precept is whenever an Authority gives a truth, and the truth is based on the Authority that gives it. Now, the Bible is our Authority because the Bible is God’s Word to believers.

The truth the Bible gives us about our financial resources and our tithe is that God commands us to give 10% of our income back to God.

We return it to God. If you read Genesis 28, Deuteronomy 14, 2 Chron. 31, and Nehemiah 14 – each of these outlines specifically the idea of the tithe. Then, the last book of the Old Testament, Malachi 3 tells us that when we do not give our tithe to God, we are stealing from God!!

This is what GOD says in the Book of Malachi, “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!

Now, some folks say, “Well that is Old Testament, so it doesn’t apply, because we live under the New Testament. Wrong! Jesus says in the New Testament, “I did not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill the law and make it applicable for you.”

The Pharisees were tithers, but Jesus told them, “You are careful to tithe the tiniest part of your income, but you completely forget about justice and the love of God.” Tithing is the minimum we do, but this does not let us off the hook. We must also not neglect the other important things that God commands. So, tithing is a precept.

Tithing is also a perspective. A perspective is how we look at something. Each of us here today has a perspective about things in life. Now, a perspective can either be correct, or incorrect.

There was a 3rd grade boy who came home from school one day and his dad asked how school was going. The boy replied, “Great, I

made a hundred!” Amazed, because the boy didn’t usually bring home one hundreds, the father replied, “A hundred! What do you mean?” And the boy replied, “Yes sir! I made 40 in spelling, 40 in science, and 20 in geography!” Now, that’s a perspective, but it’s not a correct perspective, is it?

A lady was picking up some kids for kindergarten, and when she arrived at one house, as a little girl was getting into the car, the lady noticed an elderly woman waving from the porch. She asked the little girl, “Is that your grandmother?” The girl replied, “Yes.” So, the lady asked, “Is she visiting you?” The girl replied again, “Yes.”

“Well, where does your grandmother live” the lady asked. And the girl replied, “The airport.” “What do you mean?” the lady asked. And the little girl replied, “Well, every time we want her, we drive out to the airport and pick her up. And when we’re through with her, we take her back.” Now, both the little boy and little girl have a perspective, but they are incorrect perspectives.

Tithing introduces us to God’s perspective of life. “Everything is mine,” says the Lord. So, the correct perspective is that God owns everything! When you say, “Here’s how I am going to serve the church.” Or, “Here’s how much I am going to give to the church.” You don’t have the right perspective.

Your time is not yours. God gives you time, and you look after it for Him. You are a “caretaker” or “steward” of that time for God. And, it’s the same with your money – it’s all God’s money! You are simply looking after it for Him. Everything we have is a gift from God. So, we have to ask ourselves, “How am I going to take care of the money God has given to me?”

In Jesus' parable in Matthew 21, he tells about a man who hires some people to take care of a vineyard. He then leaves, but later, he sends a servant to collect his share of the harvest. Now the caretakers of the vineyard have a wrong perspective – they think they own it, and so they beat the servant up and send him back to the owner.

The owner of the vineyard thinks to himself, well surely the caretakers have made a mistake, and so he sends another servant, but the caretakers beat him up too. So the owner thinks, well gosh, I bought that land with my own money, and I allowed these people to live there, and be paid to take care of it. They just don't seem to get it!

Surely, if I send my son, they will respect him and give to me what is mine. But guess what?! They say to themselves, if we kill the heir to the vineyard, it will all be ours. And so, they kill the son. Does that remind you of what God has done for each of us by sending his son, the Lord, Jesus Christ? The correct perspective is that everything belongs to God.

So, how are we going to use, and take care of, all that belongs to God? How we use our financial resources are an indicator of how much we appreciate what God has given to us, and our willingness to obey God's command to give back to him a percentage of what is already His.

The right perspective is - we don't own anything. Everything is God's! The air you breathe, your talents, your family, everything! The tithe is the minimum amount you give back to God, which indicates your faithfulness.

The tithe is also percentage – it's 10%. Genesis 14:20 tells us that a tithe is 10% and we offer this back to God ***first***, before we use anything God has given to us for ourselves. If God gives us a dollar in

income, we give 10 cents of that dollar back to God through our church offering.

Now, let me try to be clear on this. We tithe on anything we earn as income. We don't tithe on our retirement savings, though we may give to God a love offering from our retirement funds. When we tithe, and teach our children to tithe, we become wholly dependent upon God, which is the way we are supposed to live as children of God, right?

Tithing is also a picture. Where do you put your money? Jesus said, wherever your treasure is, there your heart and thoughts will also be. So, what you give to God through the church is an indicator, or a “snap-shot” of your love for God, and your faithfulness to God. Tithing is a gage, or measure, of your commitment to Christ.

In Matthew 19, a man comes to Jesus with this question: “Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?” And Jesus replies, “If you want to be perfect, go and sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” Where you put your money shows God what is most important in your life.

Finally, Tithing is a plan. It's God's plan for God's people. If every person in this church would follow God's plan, and God's principle of tithing, this church would have more money that we would know how to use for Christ! If every Christian in every church tithed, as God commands, the church would be able to meet any need in our world.

Money is neither good nor bad, but it can control our lives. Our financial giving can either imprison us, or it can free us up to do and be all God wants us to do and be.

OK, let's review.

Tithing is a precept – God's Word teaches us to do it!

Tithing is a perspective – God's owns everything!

Tithing is a percentage – 10% of our income.

Tithing is a picture – of your relationship with God.

Tithing is a plan – by which God's church impacts the world for Christ.

Now, let me ask you, is your financial giving to God consistent with the tithe, or even beyond the tithe? If not, why? If it isn't, and you would like to step out in faith to be obedient to God concerning the tithe, then take a moment, right now, and talk to God about it.

If God is dealing with your heart right now, ask God to help you to surrender to him, and to trust him. Ask God to bless you, as you make a decision to step out in faith, and be obedient to his call to tithe.

As you consider what your part of the financial support of our 2014 ministry budget will be, I'd like to ask the ushers to distribute the financial commitment cards at this time.

When you have filled out your card and small group survey, please place them in the envelope provided, and bring them up to the Communion table as an offering of your commitment to God. May God bless each of you!

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- a tithe is not is just any amount of money we decide to give.
- a tithe is not is a plan to become wealthy
- tithing is not is the church’s financial plan to help make sure the church’s financial needs are being supported.

Five concepts from God’s word that teach us what a tithe is.

- A tithe is a precept - the truth the Bible gives us about our financial resources and our tithe is that God commands us to give 10% of our income back to God.
- Tithing is a perspective - Everything we have is a gift from God. So, we have to ask ourselves, “How am I going to take care of the money God has given to me?”
- The tithe is also percentage – it’s 10%. we give 10 cents of that dollar back to God through our church offering.
- Tithing is also a picture. Where do you put your money? Jesus said, wherever your treasure is, there your heart and thoughts will also be. So, what you give to God through the church is an indicator, or a “snap-shot” of your love for God, and your faithfulness to God.
- Tithing is a plan. It’s God’s plan for God’s people. If every Christian in every church tithed, as God commands, the church would be able to meet any need in our world.

Review.

Tithing is a *precept* – God’s Word teaches us to do it!

Tithing is a *perspective* – God’s owns everything!

Tithing is a *percentage* – 10% of our income.

Tithing is a *picture* – of your relationship with God.

Tithing is a *plan* – by which God’s church impacts the world for Christ.

*For consideration...*Is your financial giving to God consistent with the tithe, or even beyond the tithe? If not, why? If it isn’t, and you would like to step out in faith to be obedient to God concerning the tithe, ask God to bless you, as you make a decision to step out in faith, and be obedient to His call to tithe.