

**NEW
BIRTH IN
GIVING - I**

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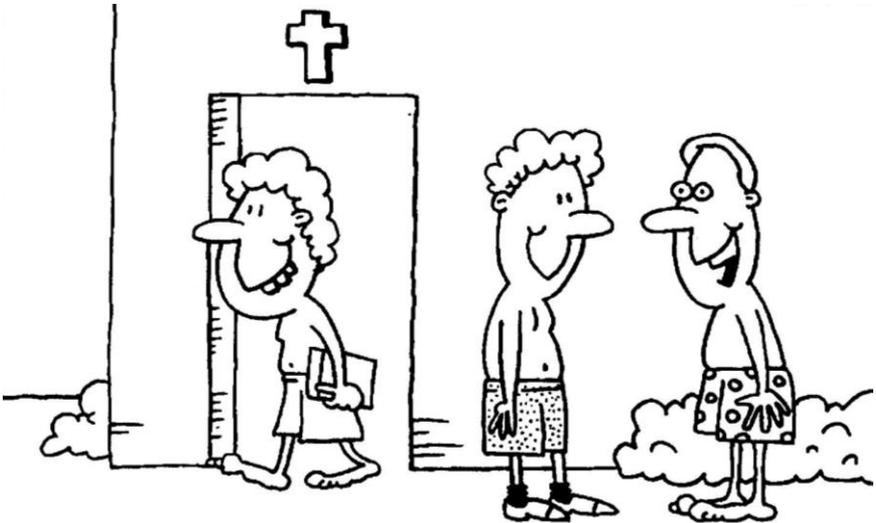
Nov. 17, 2013

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Sermon in a sentence: God desires to give us great financial blessings through our faith-filled obedience to His Word regarding giving.

Scriptures: Deut 12:5-8, 11-12a; Deut 26:1-11; Gen. 28:16-22; Mal. 3:8-12; Matt. 23:23; 2 Cor 9:6-11

When pastors begin to talk about giving, many folks think they'll be going home looking like this!



“WOW!! ... That was the best sermon on tithing I’ve ever heard!”

However, I hope you will soon see just how unscriptural this cartoon is. So, here’s the ‘punch line’ right up front: **Giving to God never takes a blessing from us. It always gives a blessing to us!**

Biblical history regarding giving has three main divisions:

The Patriarchal Age: approx 4000BC – 1300BC

The Old Testament / The Law: 1300BC – 30AD

The New Testament / Church Age / Dispensation of Grace: 30AD – Present

THE PATRIARCHAL AGE

We don't know for sure where tithing originated.

However, Bible commentators tell us that land owners in ancient time would often lease their land to farmers to grow crops. As money was not being used as widely as it is today, the lease payment would usually be one tenth, or the tithe, of the produce harvested. This was deemed to be fair and reasonable compensation to the landowner. In times of war, kings would also share the spoils of conquest with any other king who assisted them in gaining victory over their enemies.

It seems that Abraham was thinking along these lines when he made his way to Melchisedek to pay his tithe, after rescuing Lot and his family. In effect he was saying: "God, you own all things and You are the King who ensured my success in this battle. Therefore, I will give You Your portion of the spoils" (Gen 14:18-20).

You may remember Abraham's grandson Jacob, who was a master con artist and thief. He defrauded his own brother of his birthright and blessing, and had to quickly leave home to avoid getting killed. On his way out of town, he met with God, (by accident), and entered into one of the most audacious negotiating sessions in recorded history.

He said:

**IF You go with me,
IF You keep me in the way,
IF You give me food and clothing,
IF You allow me to return home in peace,
THEN You will be my God,
THEN I will build You an altar and
THEN I will give You a tithe. (Gen 28:16-22)**

This was not quite God's preferred way, but He accepted the deal and did everything Jacob requested. (Jehovah really wanted to be his God!)

OLD TESTAMENT LAW

400 years later, around 1300BC, Moses met with God on Mount Sinai and received His law. Included was the law regarding tithing. Here it is in a nutshell:

The 'Firstfruits', (Exodus 23:14-19, Deuteronomy 16:16-17), along with new wine and oil (Deut 14:22-27) and the tithe of the flock (Leviticus 27:32) belonged to God.

The 'Lord's Tithe' or the 'Temple Tithe' was to be given for support of the Priests and Levites (Numbers 18:8-24, Leviticus 27:30-32)

The 'Festival Tithe' or the 'Celebration Tithe': was used to celebrate the goodness and provision of God. This tithe was to be consumed within each household, with a portion being given to the Levites (Deut 14:22-27)

The 'Benevolence Tithe' was collected every 3rd year for the benefit of the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless and the widow (Deut 14:28-29, Deut. 26:12-13)

In addition to these specific tithes, there was a host of other freewill offerings and sacrifices that the people brought to the Lord (Deut. 12:5-6,11; Leviticus, chs. 1 to 7). Special offerings were also given for the construction and maintenance of the temple (Ex 35:21-29, 36:3-7; 2 Chronicles 24:4-14, Ezra 1:5-6).

All of this equated to annual prescribed giving of 23.33% of total income, plus freewill offerings!

So, how are we doing today?

- *According to the Gallup pollsters and others, those who attend church weekly give an average of 2.5% of their income to their church.*
- *The average churchgoer donates \$649 per year to their church.*
- *One third to one half of church members in North America give nothing at all.*

Going back to the Law for a minute, it contains instructions regarding how God wants us to go about this business of giving. Here they are:

AS WE ARE GIVING, GOD WANTS US TO REMEMBER HIS PROVISION, WORSHIP HIM, TESTIFY OF HIS GOODNESS, HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH OUR FAMILIES AND THOSE IN NEED, AND REJOICE!!

To highlight these points, let's listen to what Moses told the people of Israel:

Deut 12:5-8, 11-12a NLT “... you must seek the LORD your God at the place he himself will choose from among all the tribes for his name to be honored. 6 There you will bring to the LORD your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, your special gifts, your offerings to fulfill a vow, your freewill offerings, and your offerings of the firstborn animals of your flocks and herds. 7 There you and your families will feast in the presence of the LORD your God, and you will rejoice in all you have accomplished **BECAUSE the LORD your God has blessed you. 8 "Today you are doing whatever you please, but that is not how it will be.... 11 you must bring everything I command you - your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, your special gifts, and your offerings to fulfill a vow — to the place the LORD your God will choose for his name to be honored. 12 You must celebrate there with your sons and daughters and all your servants in the presence of the LORD your God.**

Deut 26:1-11 NLT “When you arrive in the land the LORD your God is giving you as a special possession and you have conquered it and settled there, 2 put some of the first produce from each harvest into a basket and bring it to the place the LORD your God chooses for his name to be honored. 3 Go to the priest in charge at that time and say to him, 'With this gift I acknowledge that the LORD your God has brought me into the land he swore to give our ancestors.' 4 The priest will then take the basket from your hand and set it before the altar of the LORD your God. 5 You must then say in the presence of the LORD your God, 'My ancestor Jacob was a wandering Aramean who went to live in Egypt. His family was few in number, but in Egypt they became a mighty and numerous nation. 6 When the Egyptians mistreated and humiliated us by making us their slaves, 7 we cried out to the LORD, the God of our ancestors. He heard us and saw our hardship, toil, and oppression. 8 So the LORD brought us out of Egypt with amazing power, overwhelming terror, and miraculous

signs and wonders. 9 He brought us to this place and gave us this land flowing with milk and honey! 10 And now, O LORD, I have brought you a token of the first crops you have given me from the ground.' Then place the produce before the LORD your God and worship him. 11 Afterward go and celebrate **BECAUSE** of all the good things the LORD your God has given to you and your household. Remember to include the Levites and the foreigners living among you in the celebration.

So, let me repeat:

AS WE ARE GIVING, GOD WANTS US TO REMEMBER HIS PROVISION, WORSHIP HIM, TESTIFY OF HIS GOODNESS, HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH OUR FAMILIES AND THOSE IN NEED, AND REJOICE!!

This is why we often make this statement before we bring the Lord's tithe and our offerings into the storehouse:

"This is my offering I bring to the Lord with joy. God is the source of everything I own, everything I earn and every blessing I enjoy. I come now to worship God by giving a portion of what He has given to me, to bless His work and His kingdom".

Chorus: Lord I Give Myself To You