

FAITH OVER FEAR

Ice Breaker: Can you think of a time when God rewarded your stepping out in faith (especially in giving) in a substantial way?

Pastor Dave: Tithing is not giving; it's returning what belongs to God.

1. How is tithing returning what belongs to God?

2. How much of what you have do you have from God? How can you best acknowledge His provision?

First instance of tithing is found in Abraham:

Genesis 14:18-20 (NIV)

***18** Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, **19** and he blessed Abram, saying, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. **20** And praise be to God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand." Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.*

A comment on this passage we find in Hebrews 5:9-10.

***9** And, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him **10** and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.*

The meaning of the passage is explained in **Hebrews 7:1-10**. This chapter is the only chapter in the epistles to teach about the tenth.

1 This Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him, **2** and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. First, the name Melchizedek means “king of righteousness”; then also, “king of Salem” means “king of peace.” **3** Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, resembling the Son of God, he remains a priest forever. **4** Just think how great he was: Even the patriarch Abraham gave him a tenth of the plunder! **5** Now the law requires the descendants of Levi who become priests to collect a tenth from the people—that is, from their fellow Israelites—even though they also are descended from Abraham. **6** This man, however, did not trace his descent from Levi, yet he collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. **7** And without doubt the lesser is blessed by the greater. **8** In the one case, the tenth is collected by people who die; but in the other case, by him who is declared to be living. **9** One might even say that Levi, who collects the tenth, paid the tenth through Abraham, **10** because when Melchizedek met Abraham, Levi was still in the body of his ancestor.

3. What is Hebrews point about Levi, who had not even been born yet?

4. Had Abraham been given the law when he tithed to Melchizedek? What does his tithe symbolize according to Hebrews 7?

5. Why, knowing our high priest, should we give regularly to our church?

Pastor Dave: The tithe provides for God’s work through His church.

The principle was followed by the New Testament church. Paul mentions faithful giving by the church and pronounces the blessing of God upon it.

2 Corinthians 8:1-7

1 And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. 2 In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. 3 For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, 4 they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people. 5 And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us. 6 So we urged Titus, just as he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. 7 But since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you—see that you also excel in this grace of giving.

6. How did the giving of the church at Corinth exceed Paul's expectations?

7. How can you personally "excel in this grace of giving"?

Pastor Dave: The tithe teaches me to put God first.

Please note that Jacob decided to give a tithe long before the Law was given.

Genesis 28:20-22

20 Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear 21 so that I return safely to my father's household, then the Lord[f] will be my God 22 and[g] this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth."

8. How is tithing able to teach us to put God first? Why is it so important for us to engage in giving a portion first to God?

9. Jacob makes a vow, asking God for some things. What are those things?

Pastor Dave: The tithe increases my faith in God. It teaches me that 90% with God's blessing, goes further than 100% without it.

In Philippi, the church was encouraged to give, and in their giving some good things happened.

Philippians 4:10-19

10 I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. 11 I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 12 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. 13 I can do all this through him who gives me strength. 14 Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. 15 Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; 16 for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid more than once when I was in need. 17 Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account. 18 I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. 19 And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.

10. Why is Paul rejoicing? What is the history of giving in Philippi?

11. What is the promise that Paul iterates for the giving church? How should that promise apply to Christians who are giving today?

12. Why does the Bible command us to be cheerful in giving?

2 Corinthians 9:7

7 Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver

13. How can you tell whether you are giving in a sacrificial way? How can you do a spiritual inventory today of your giving?

Pastor Dave: I will give God my first and my best, so He can bless the rest.