

Frequently Asked Questions - Tithing

What is tithing?

The word tithe is translated from the Hebrew word Ma'aser. Its basic meaning is tenth, tenth part, or payment of tenth part. Tithing is the practice of giving to the Lord at least 10% of your income. This is done to honor God for all of his provisions for us and to remind us that he is the ultimate giver. Proverbs 3:9 says, "Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops".

When did tithing start?

On Mount Sinai, God commanded Moses to tell the Israelites that the tithe was sacred, that it is holy to the Lord. This command in Leviticus 27:30 says, "A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD, it is holy to the LORD."

How was the tithe used?

When the Israelites entered the Promised Land, the priests lived off a portion of the tithes and offerings that came in. This allowed the priests to dedicate full time service to ministry. Numbers 18:21 says, "I give to the Levites all the tithes in Israel as their inheritance in return for the work they do while serving at the Tent of Meeting." (Numbers 18:21)

The tithe was also used to meet the needs of widows, orphans, and other disadvantaged people. This is described in Deuteronomy 14:28, "... bring all the tithes of that year's produce and store it in your towns, so that the Levites (who have no allotment or inheritance of their own) and the aliens, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns may come and eat and be satisfied, and so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands."

Does that apply in the New Testament?

Yes. Paul continued the tradition and made the same case that the tithe would be used for the ministry and advancement of the gospel. "Don't you know that those who work in the temple get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel." (I Corinthians 9:13-14)

Did Jesus endorse tithing?

Yes. In his warning to the Pharisees about legalism (they were tithing, but ignoring mercy and justice) he tells them that they should not neglect tithing, but also that their hearts should not neglect mercy and justice and other attributes of the law. He says, "You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former." (Matthew 23:23)

Is tithing an act of worship?

That's exactly what it is! It's not just so the church can operate. Tithing is commanded by God as an act of worship.

What about the early church in Jerusalem?

The early church showed an example of extreme giving. Some of the first Christ-followers shared everything that they had. 100%. Those offerings were presented to the church leaders and then distributed as needed. "There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need." (Acts 4:34-35)

Are there benefits to tithing?

God promises blessing for those who are obedient to tithing. While, it may not always be a material or physical blessing, God's Word teaches the benefits. In addition, your heart will be changed as you learn to tithe. You get to be part of God's work here on earth. Ask a person who tithes about their stories of how God has blessed their generosity. Proverbs 11:24-25 says, "One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly but comes to poverty. A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed."

Should a person's tithe go to Kettlebrook or just anywhere?

The precedent that has been set in scripture shows the importance of tithing to the church (the temple in the Old Testament) to provide for the ministry. We encourage you to contribute 10% of your income to Kettlebrook's General Fund.

What about missionaries, international partners, or other charities?

Give by all means! Remember that tithing 10% is where you start, not the maximum a Christ-follower should give. It is appropriate to tithe at least 10% to the local church and then feel free to give an offering above and beyond that to anywhere else God leads.

What if I don't tithe, but I still want to be a part of Kettlebrook?

People are welcome and encouraged to participate in Kettlebrook large and small group gatherings regardless of what they contribute. For some people, tithing is a huge step and we understand that.

What if I'm not used to giving money to the church – especially 10% or more?

You will find that tithing is a very rewarding step of faith. Of course, there are times when it's hard and seems like a huge sacrifice...but that is the point! We know you will be amazed by obediently tithing.

What if I don't have very much money?

That's not the point. Remember that tithing is 10% of your income. If you learn to give the "firstfruits" or first 10% to God it doesn't matter if that equals \$10 or \$10,000. If you wait to tithe what is left over at the end of the month you will probably find that you never have enough. Tithing may require to you to change some of your spending habits and even cut back on things you don't really need. Often people who don't tithe say "I don't have any money" and those that do tithe say, "God always provides for all my needs and more!"

Is it 10% of my net income (after taxes) or my gross income?

The practice that Kettlebrook recommends is giving 10% back to the Lord of ALL that the Lord has given to you - your gross. It's not really a tithe to subtract out the largest payments and then give 10 percent out of the remainder.

Can I tithe my time instead of money?

There is no biblical precedent for tithing your time instead of money. As a matter of fact, we are expected to give God our time and our money, not one or the other. The idea of tithing time is often an excuse people give because they don't want to part with their money.

Shouldn't I just give whatever amount is on my heart?

God's word says "The heart is deceitful above all things" in Jeremiah 17:9. We have to be very careful about relying on our hearts, especially when it comes to money. Giving whatever amount is on one's heart is often an excuse for those who don't tithe. When we rely on our hearts to determine an amount we often short-change what God desires. It is ironic that as we tithe, our hearts do change and we do become more generous!

Should I tithe every week, biweekly, or monthly?

That really depends on the person or couple. Some people only get paid biweekly so it's easier to do that. Some people find it easier to tithe every week...just so they don't spend it all before they get paid. Those who are on salary often find it easy to calculate a monthly tithe.

Does the leadership of Kettlebrook tithe?

Yes! Modeling is the best way to lead others and we wouldn't ask people to do anything we aren't willing to do. We continue to stretch ourselves to give above, and beyond 10% of our income. God has always been so faithful to provide for all of our needs and much more.

So why is it still so hard for me to commit to tithing?

Only you can answer that question. For most of us, we love our money a whole lot more than we like to admit. God knows this. That is why money and stewardship is talked about so much in the Bible. God desires for us to trust Him and worship Him alone. One of the most encouraging verses about tithing is Malachi 3:10 where God promises to bless us if we simply trust Him in this area. It reads, "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty. "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it."

Anything else I should know?

Yes! You should know that Kettlebrook is extremely grateful for your interest in this topic. Talking about money and the church can often be a sensitive subject. Sometimes, this is because people have been wronged in the past with how a church dealt with money. Or perhaps they felt manipulated by a church. As you read through this, please understand that Kettlebrook is not concerned just about your money. But ... we know that how we handle money is a spiritual issue that affects our walk with Christ.