

TRUTH B-P CHURCH
Adult Sunday School

BIBLICAL STEWARDSHIP

LESSON SEVEN: GIVING TITHES AND OFFERINGS

I. INTRODUCTION

When it comes to giving of our substance, it becomes a sensitive issue. We do not mind receiving it but somehow it hurts when we open our wallet or empty our pocket. With the right understanding of being a good, faithful and accountable steward, we will then be able to learn how to give cheerfully and manage the resources in our care accordingly.

Giving is not merely a financial transaction. To give is an act of worship, gratitude, obedience, trust, and love toward God. God is the Owner. We can never run away from this foundational truth behind biblical stewardship. Everything belongs to God, including the money we earned with our hard work. Sometimes there are those who speak as though giving to God means without our money, God cannot do anything. This is wrong theology. God does not lack anything. He does not need us to provide anything for Him. Why then do we still give our tithes and offerings to Him? This lesson will deal with the purpose of giving tithes and offerings with the right attitude and motive.

II. DEFINITION OF TITHES AND OFFERINGS

There is a distinction between tithes and offerings. What is a tithe? The word “tithe” means “a tenth.” The principle is giving one-tenth of increase or income unto God. In the Old Testament, tithing was practiced long before the giving of the law of Moses. This is important because some people think tithing only belongs to the Mosaic Law.

The Bible records Abraham who gave tithes to Melchizedek (see Genesis 14:20). Abraham was born more than 400 years before Moses and before the Law. Jacob also followed the same principle and practice of giving. Genesis 28:22, “And of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.” This was long before the Mosaic Law. This shows that tithing reflects an enduring principle of honoring God with substance.

What are offerings? Offerings are simply voluntary gifts given beyond the tithe. The tithe represents obedience and acknowledgment of God’s ownership. Offerings represent love, sacrifice, generosity, and thanksgiving towards God. Offerings could vary in amount depending on one’s ability and willingness. Be it tithes or offerings, they are given to God for the advancement of His kingdom and support of the gospel works in these last days.

III. PURPOSE OF GIVING

It is important to know the purpose of giving. Why did God establish the principle of tithing? There are at least three important purposes.

A. Honouring God

Proverbs 3:9, “Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase.” By giving honour to God, it is acknowledging Him as the Source of all blessings. In the Old Testament, the children of Israel believed that it is always God who gave the increase and harvest. Therefore, they did the right thing by giving God the best of the crops. This is how they honour Him.

When we tithe, we are confessing that God is the One who gives us strength and a good mind to work. We acknowledge that all blessings come from above and none from us. More than just acknowledgement, giving is also worship. That is why giving is also part of the worship service. In the Old Testament, God's people brought their offerings as part of their worship as they come to the house of God. Likewise, we worship God with our substance from a heart filled with reverence and thanksgiving towards God.

B. Supporting God's Work

Under the Old Testament administration, tithes were used to support the Levites and temple ministry. Malachi 3:10, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house." The house of God is taken care by the Levites. The tithes used to gather meat are primarily for the Levites' consumption. Based on Numbers 18:20-24, it explained why the Levites were the ones who used the tithes of the people. The Levites had no land as their inheritance in Israel. As such, God determined and appointed the tithes of Israel as their inheritance and provision. The responsibility of the Levites is full time service in the tabernacle or temple of God.

Under the New Testament administration, tithes are used to support the full time staff (pastors, preachers and ministerial personnel), upkeep of the church building (maintenance) and the church ministry. Ultimately, God's people must support God's work. The work of God requires earthly resources. Apostle Paul taught in 1 Corinthians 9:14, "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel."

C. Having Faith in God

Giving tithes and offerings is a demonstration of our faith in God. People today trust money more than God because of materialism and covetousness. The Lord Jesus challenges His disciples on the sermon on the mount, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24).

Giving does serve as a test of our faith. It proves whether our faith in God is genuine or not. When we give in love and obedience, it means we acknowledge God is our Provider and our security is found in Him, not our possession. The more we give, the more our faith and dependency upon God.

IV. ATTITUDE IN GIVING

God does not look at the amount of giving but the heart behind that giving.

A. Cheerful Giving

2 Corinthians 9:7, "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." God does not delight in giving that is not sincere at all. Some people give reluctantly out of pressure, fear, pride, or obligation. But biblical giving flows from love and gratitude. The word "cheerful" carries the idea of joyful willingness.

B. Sincere Giving

The Lord Jesus warned against hypocritical giving. In Matthew 6:1-2, He rebuked those who gave publicly merely to gain human praise. Some people give to impress others in order to appear spiritual, gain recognition, or to build reputation. But God sees every motive of the heart. Biblical stewardship seeks God's glory, not personal admiration.

C. Sacrificial Giving

One of the greatest examples is the widow's offering in Mark 12:41-44. Rich people may have given their tithes and offerings in large amounts. However, the Lord Jesus took notice of the poor widow and commended her because she has given her all sacrificially. Her tithes and offerings may be small in terms of monetary value compared to many, yet it was great in spiritual value in the sight of God.

True giving is measured not merely by amount, but by love, sacrifice and devotion. King David said in 2 Samuel 24:24, "Neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing." Biblical giving does involve sacrifice.

V. PITFALLS INVOLVING GIVING

A. Covetousness

Covetousness or greed is a serious spiritual danger. The Lord Jesus warned in Luke 12:15, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness." A covetous heart always wants more and is never satisfied. Materialism can slowly and easily replace our devotion to God.

Did not Apostle Paul warn in 1 Timothy 6:9-10, "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish, and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

Some people trust bank accounts more than God. But wealth is uncertain. Economic downturns, disasters, illness, and unexpected events can remove earthly security quickly. 1 Timothy 6:17 warns, "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy."

B. Sinful Motives in Giving

Some give in order to "manipulate" God. They thought that by giving more, God is obliged to multiply riches many times over. Some preachers taught giving as a form of investment. The greater the giving, the higher the returns. This becomes transactional religion rather than loving worship. God cannot be bribed. Giving should never be driven by greed.

Giving also does not mean having the right to certain privileges in the church. Giving does not mean one can exchange for a leadership position in church. By giving more does not give anyone the right to order another believer to serve him or her. It also does not mean the one who gave more to the offering bag deserves a higher seat of honour than the rest. All such motives in giving are sinful and unacceptable by God.

VI. SUMMARY

Giving tithes and offerings is not merely about finances. It is about worship, faith, obedience, gratitude, and stewardship. In a world dominated by greed and materialism, faithful Christian stewardship shines as a testimony that God is greater than our earthly wealth.

One day we will stand before God and give account for how we have managed His resources. May we be found faithful stewards. Let us give our tithes and offerings cheerfully and use our resources for the glory of God, the edification of the church, the advancement of His kingdom and the defence of the gospel in these last days. May our giving always flow from hearts filled with love for our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.