

WHY I TITHE
By Andy Manning
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The title of this sermon is, “Why I Tithe.” Today I want to take a break from our sermon series through Titus to address the topic of tithing. Why? Well, if the vast majority of Christians tithed, then we would rarely need to talk about it. If tithing wasn’t a challenge, then we would rarely need to bring it up. But the problem is that even though tithing is a clear command in Scripture, many Christians (if not most) do not tithe. Most studies show that the average Christian gives about 2 to 3 percent of their income to God. That’s not even close to a tithe. And so it’s obvious that this is something that we need to spend time, but it’s very challenging to many Christians.

Why don’t Christians tithe? I’m sure the answer to that question depends on the individual. So instead of trying to guess at the answer to that question, I’ll tell you why I do tithe. Today I just want to give you the reasons I tithe. My hope is that if you are struggling to tithe, this sermon will encourage you to be obedient to God.

My Top Ten Reasons For Tithing

1. I tithe because the Bible is my authority.

I believe that the Bible is God's word. **2 Timothy 3:16-17** says, “16 All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”

As God's word, it is truth without any mixture of error. Therefore I must believe it, and I must obey it. To disbelieve the Bible is to disbelieve God; to disobey the Bible is to disobey God. I believe what the Bible says about tithing; and accept the Bible's teaching on tithing as binding on my life.

2. I tithe because the Bible commands it.

To tithe is to give the first ten percent of your income to the local church where you attend (the word "tithe" means a tenth).

Tithing is commanded in the Old Testament. **Leviticus 27:30** says, “Every tenth of the land’s produce, grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord; it is holy to the Lord.”

Some people say that we don't need to tithe because tithing was just for Jews before Christ. They say we are no longer under the law, but under grace. It's true that we are no longer under the law in the sense that we don't keep the law in order to go to heaven; Ephesians 2:8-9 says that salvation is now by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

As well, we are no longer under the law in the sense that there are many Old Testament laws that no longer apply to Christians. Matthew 5:17 says that Christ came to fulfill the law. Colossians 3:11 says we no longer need to be circumcised. In Mark 7:19 Jesus declared all foods clean (so we no longer have eat a kosher diet). Colossians 2:16-17 says we no longer have to observe the Sabbath or other Jewish holidays. Hebrews 10:18 says that we no longer need to offer sacrifices to God. So it is true that many of the Old Testament laws no longer apply to Christians.

But it is not true that all Old Testament laws are irrelevant to Christians. For example, the Ten Commandments are still binding, right? All but Sabbath-keeping. As well, the commands to love God and love your neighbor originated in the Old Testament; aren't those still binding?

So how do we know which Old Testament laws are still binding for Christians? You can ask a series of questions. First, does the New Testament affirm it? In the case of tithing, the answer is yes. In **Matthew 23:23** Jesus affirmed tithing. He was rebuking the Pharisees because they were careful to tithe, but at the same time they were not merciful and generous. He said, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You pay a tenth of mint, dill, and cumin, and yet you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy, and faithfulness. These things should have been done without neglecting the others." In other words, "You did right by tithing; but you should also have been just, merciful, and faithful."

A second question is does the New Testament explicitly say that you no longer need to obey a certain law? In the case of tithing, no. The NT clearly says that we no longer need to offer sacrifices, and only eat kosher food, and get circumcised; but the New Testament does not say that we no longer need to tithe.

A third question to ask is what did the early church believe? When you look back at church history, tithing was practiced by Christians in the first few hundred years of Christianity. **Augustine** wrote, "Tithes are required as a matter of debt, and he who has been unwilling to give them has been guilty of robbery. Whosoever, therefore, desires to secure a reward for himself... let him render tithes, and out of the nine parts let him seek to give alms." **Jerome**

wrote, "If anyone shall not do this (pay tithes) he is convicted of defrauding and supplanting God."

As well, it is important to note that tithing was practiced before God gave the law to Moses. In Genesis 14:20 Abraham gave a tithe to the priest Melchizedek. This implies that tithing transcends the Old Testament law.

When you put all this together, I believe that it is clear that the Bible commands Christians to tithe, and that's why I do it. That's what being a Christian is all about – reading the Bible and doing what it says.

3. I tithe because I believe that everything I have belongs to God.

The Bible teaches God owns it all. **Psalm 24:1-2** says, "1 The earth and everything in it, the world and its inhabitants, belong to the Lord; 2 for he laid its foundation on the seas and established it on the rivers." This passage teaches that everything belongs to God because He is the creator.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 says, "19 Don't you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, 20 for you were bought at a price. So glorify God with your body." This passage teaches that I belong to God because He bought me with the price of Christ's blood. So I am doubly God's property. Everything I have is His.

This means that I don't merely owe God the first ten percent, but everything. He has the right to require an offering of 100% if He wants. My money belongs to God; I am only a steward. I don't own anything; I am only God's money manager.

4. I tithe because I love God.

I don't love God because I'm a great person; I love God because I have experienced His love for me. My love for God is merely a response to His amazing love for me. **1 John 4:19** says, "We love because he first loved us." love the Lord because He created me, saved me, redeemed me, adopted me, gives me abundant life, provides for me, and works everything out for my good.

And because I love God, I want to obey Him. Jesus said in **John 14:15** says, "If you love me, you will keep my commands." Because I love God, I want to do things that please Him; and I want

to avoid anything that might offend Him, or bring Him sadness, or interfere with His plan. Because I love Him, I want to obey Him.

In other words, I don't merely tithe because I have to. I want to tithe because if that's what God wants, then that's what I want. If that's what pleases God, then that's what I want. If that's how I contribute to God's kingdom, then that's what I want.

5. I tithe because I fear God.

I don't deny that sometimes I fear that I won't have enough money to adequately provide for my family, but I fear God more. In **Matthew 10:28** Jesus said, "Don't fear those who kill the body but are not able to kill the soul; rather, fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

As God's child, I know He will swiftly and effectively discipline me when I deliberately disobey Him. **Hebrews 12:6** says, "For the Lord disciplines the one he loves and punishes every son he receives."

In Acts 5:1-11 God struck dead the husband and wife, Ananias and Sapphira, because they lied about giving to the church. In Acts 12:23, after Herod Agrippa gave a speech, the people praised him and said that he had the voice of a god, and because he did not give the glory to God, the angel of the Lord struck him, and he was eaten with words and died. When Jonah tried to run from God, God sent a giant fish to eat him. When David committed adultery and murder, God killed his unborn child.

Hebrews 10:31 says, "It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God." **Hebrews 12:20** says that "our God is a consuming fire."

God is love. But the same God who loves, and who loves to bless, is also the God who will not hesitate to discipline His wayward children.

And so I tithe because I fear God. I would rather be poor than fall into the hands of the living. To put it another way, I tithe because I can't afford not to.

6. I tithe because God promises to bless me.

The Bible is very clear that God promises a HUGE blessing for those who are faithful to tithe. **Malachi 3:10-12** says, "Bring the full tenth into the storehouse so that there may be food in my

house. Test me in this way," says the Lord of Armies. "See if I will not open the floodgates of heaven and pour out a blessing for you without measure."

I'm sure you've heard this before, but this is the only time in the Bible where God says to test Him. God dares you to tithe. He wants to use tithing to reveal Himself to you, and to bless you.

In 2014 a couple in the church was impacted by a sermon on tithing. They kept thinking about how their financial situation could either be blessed or cursed. As they continued to talk with one another about the sermon, they realized they couldn't take it any longer. They believed the Bible was clear on tithing and admitted to Him they were living in disobedience in this area. The wife said, "I can't continue to live life, stealing from God. Enough of this." They made the commitment to begin tithing and felt a burden lifted. They were still unsure how they would make ends meet, but trusted God would provide and show them the way.

The same week they made the commitment, unbelievable things happened. First, the husband received an unexpected pay raise at work. Then the wife experienced the same thing – the same week.

I tithe because I want God's full blessing on my life. I believe that living on 90% with God's blessing is much better than living on 100% under God's discipline.

7. I tithe because I love the local church.

Where do tithes go? They fund the work of the local church, and what better place for your money to go? The local church is a much better investment than the car dealership, or the mortgage company, or Walmart, or the mall, or Starbucks, or Disney! The church is the bride of Christ (Eph 5:25-27), the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:27), the family of God (1 Tim 3:15), the temple of God (Eph 2:19-22), the pillar and foundation of the truth (1 Tim 3:15). It is not perfect, but it is the hope of the world. Investing in the local church has eternal returns. I regret a lot of purchases, but I've never regretted investing in the local church.

8. I tithe because it's easy.

I had the privilege of being raised by Christian parents who tithed my whole life. As well, I married a godly woman who also was raised by Christian parents who always tithed. Lydia and I have been tithing since our first paycheck, and have never stopped. We tithed when we had less; and we tithed when we had more. So today, tithing is easy. It's a habit. 10% seems so small. Every month we save and invest more than three times as much as we tithe. That's why

we are passionate about teaching our kids to tithe even as children. The earlier you start, the easier it is. And that's an encouragement to you parents to teach your kids to tithe from an early age, and that way it will be easy and natural for them to tithe as God give them more money.

9. I tithe to set the example.

As a pastor my calling is to set the example for my church. Paul told the young pastor, Timothy, in **1 Timothy 4:12**, "Don't let anyone despise your youth, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity." As a pastor, my life is to be a visible sermon. I hope my tithing is an inspiration to others.

I don't tithe because I'm wealthy. I am a pastor, not a doctor, lawyer, or insurance agent. I'm the pastor of a small church -- we're not Saddleback or North Point. I'm bi-vocational -- I have to work two jobs to provide for my family. We are a single-income family -- my wife is a full-time homemaker, not bringing in any income. We have six children -- and they demand meals every day. Yet we have always tithed, even when we were poor seminary students. And God has always blessed us beyond our imagination. If we can tithe, you can tithe.

10. I tithe because it helps me to put God first in my life.

The Bible says in **Deuteronomy 14:23** (TLB), "The purpose of tithing is to teach you always to put God first in your lives." In other words, the reason why God created tithing is ultimately to teach you how to put Him first in your life. How does that work?

First of all, money is usually the hardest thing to surrender to God's control. Without money, I can't pay for food, clothing, shelter, medical care, transportation, etc. I need money. As a result, my natural instinct is to hold on to my money as much as possible. But when I tithe, I am giving God control of the hardest thing in my. And that makes easier to give God control over every other arena of my life.

But there's another principle at work when you tithe. It's found in **Matthew 6:21**. Jesus said, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Money does two things. First, it reveals your priorities. Show me your money, and I'll know what's important to you. But second, money sets your priorities. The more money you invest into something, the more important that something becomes to you. And so as you tithe, God will become more and more important in your life.

So tithing helps me to put and keep God first in my life.

CONCLUSION

So those are my top ten reasons for tithing. They aren't my only reasons; these are just the most important.

And now I want to close by encouraging you to begin tithing. If you haven't been tithing faithfully, then I encourage you to begin tithing today. I encourage you just to begin with a 3-month commitment (90-Day Tithing Challenge). Starting this next month, make a commitment to tithe for the next three months. Put God to the test. See if He will bless you just like He promised.

And if you are making that commitment, I want you to write it on your connection card. And I'll send you a free book in the mail that will encourage you in the area of tithing and generosity.