

A WORD FITLY SPOKEN



ARE TITHES AND OFFERINGS THE SAME?

John Avanzini

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By
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Are Tithes and Offerings the Same?

Many people are confused about the tithe and an offering. Even ministers mistakenly interchange these two words. One Sunday they may say, "It's time to take up the tithe " The next week it may be, "It's time to receive the offering."

Tithing is not just another word for the Sunday offering. The tithe and the offering are two entirely different things. It is extremely important to understand the difference between the two. A lack of understanding could cause you to miss the scriptural benefits of tithing and giving offerings. However, when you know and properly practice both, you position yourself to experience God's greatest blessing in your finances.

I know you want to enjoy the blessings of God, so let's take a few minutes to examine what the Scripture says about tithes

and offerings. This way you can learn to optimize the benefits of seed time and harvest.

The Tithe Is Ten Percent

Let's begin by looking at the word *tithe*. According to Webster's Dictionary, the word *tithe* means "to pay or give a tenth part of." Therefore, we find that the tithe is a tenth or ten percent.

Let me give you a simple illustration. If you have ten apples, what is the tithe? According to Webster's definition, it is one apple. Now let's use money as an illustration. What is the tithe on \$500? The answer is \$50. The tithe is ten percent (10%) of a person's increase.

The tithe is not based on your circumstances. Some people teach that if you're on a tight budget, you can pay six percent, and it will qualify as a tithe. That is simply not true. There is no scriptural justification for that kind of teaching. The tithe is always ten percent. It never changes.

It would be wrong to say, "I think I'll tithe \$20 this month," for the amount of your tithe is unchangeable. You can't personally decide the percentage of your tithe. According to the definition of the word *tithe*, ten percent is the only amount that qualifies. If you read what the Bible actually says about the tithe, there will be no room left for doubt.

Scriptural Definitions

The original text of the Old Testament was written in Hebrew, and the New Testament in Greek. If you check the Hebrew and Greek concordances, you will find they both define the word *tithe* as ten percent.

Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and

**pour you out a blessing, that there
shall not be room enough to receive it
Malachi 3:8,10**

The word *tithes* in these two verses is the Hebrew word *ma'aser*. Strong's Dictionary of the Hebrew language lists it as number 4643 and defines it as "a tenth "

Now let's check the Greek word for tithe.

**Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees,
hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and
anise and cummin, and have omitted the
weightier matters of the law, judgment,
mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have
done, and not to leave the other undone.**

Matthew 23:23

The word *tithe* in this verse is the Greek word *apodekatoo*. It is listed as number 586 in the Strong's Dictionary of the Greek language. Its root word, *dekatoo*, means "to give or take a tenth." According to both the Hebrew and Greek definitions, the word *tithe* means "a tenth" or ten percent.

Scripture Interprets Scripture

If there is any doubt left regarding the amount of the tithe, let's now remove it by letting scripture interpret scripture.

In the Book of Genesis we find that Abraham tithed after he defeated the five kings. When he returned home with the spoils from his victory, he met the priest Melchizedek.

And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God.

And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth:

And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he [Abraham] gave him [Melchizedek] tithes of all.

Genesis 14:18-20

I want you to pay special attention to the following phrase.

... And he [Abraham] gave ... tithes of all.

Genesis 14:20

Now focus your attention on a verse of

Scripture in the Book of Hebrews. The writer of Hebrews gives an account of the same event in the New Testament, and he states that Abraham gave ten percent.

For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him;

To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all....

Hebrews 7:1,2

When you compare these two accounts of the same event, it becomes obvious that the tithe is ten percent of the increase. While describing the same event, the Holy Spirit uses the word *tithe* in Genesis. Then in Hebrews, He uses the word *tenth*. If the Holy Spirit looks upon the tithe as ten percent, you will not go wrong concluding the same thing.

The Offering Is a Discretionary Amount

Unlike the tithe, the giver has the right to

determine the amount of his offering. Notice the Apostle Paul's instruction to the Corinthians.

Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

2 Corinthians 9:7

The Living Bible makes this even clearer.

Every one must make up his own mind as to how much he should give. Don't force anyone to give more than he really wants to, for cheerful givers are the ones God prizes.

2 Corinthians 9:7, TLB

It is up to each individual Christian to determine how much he or she will give. There is no set amount or percentage. An offering should always reflect the heart of the giver.

Cheerful givers add a special dimension of pleasure to God in each offering. So the one who receives an offering should never use pressure to make people give more than

they want to give.

... for God loveth a cheerful giver.

2 Corinthians 9:7

A Willing Mind

In the Book of Exodus, Moses gives the people a guideline for a biblical offering.

And Moses spake ... This is the thing which the LORD commanded, saying,

Take ye from among you an offering unto the LORD: whosoever is of a *willing heart*, let him bring it, an offering of the LORD; gold, and silver, and brass.

Exodus 35:4,5

Please notice the words *whosoever is of a willing heart*. Only those who are willing should give offerings.

... for cheerful givers are the ones God prizes.

2 Corinthians 9:7, TLB

God wants you to be a cheerful giver. He doesn't want you to give reluctantly or grudgingly. In fact, the Amplified Bible says:

Let each one [give] as he has made up his own mind and purposed in his heart, not reluctantly or sorrowfully or under compulsion, for God loves (He takes pleasure in, prizes above other things, and is unwilling to abandon or to do without) a cheerful (joyous, "prompt to do it") giver [whose heart is in his giving].

2 Corinthians 9:7, Amplified

Is your heart in your giving? Do you give cheerfully? If so, rest assured that God **"takes pleasure in, prizes above other things, and is unwilling to abandon or to do without"** you! If you choose to be a cheerful giver, God will take pleasure in you, and He will not abandon you!

By now it should be obvious that *tithes and offerings are two completely different things*. The tithe is fixed at ten percent of your increase, and the offering is a flexible amount regulated by your willingness to give and your love for God.

The Tithe Is a Trust

There is another important difference

between the tithe and the offering. The tithe establishes a trust relationship between you and God, while the offering establishes the depth of your love for Him.

Let me illustrate the trust relationship of tithing. Suppose you were my steward in charge of caring for my property, and I released to your trust \$100 per day for expenses and safekeeping. Let's say I told you I wanted you to set aside ten percent of every \$100, and save it for me. You were to make sure that ten percent would be available to me whenever I wanted it.

Suppose I also told you to use the remaining ninety percent to buy food, clothing, or anything else you might need, as long as you continued to set aside ten percent for my account.

If you obeyed, you would establish a trust relationship with me. This illustration is parallel to the relationship each tither shares with his God.

Now let's look at another example. A man of means has a lock on the front door.

However, all of his children have keys to that lock. Because they have developed a trust relationship with their father, he gives them access to all of his personal belongings.

In the same way, when you establish a trust relationship with your Heavenly Father through your faithful tithing, He will give you access to His domain by opening the windows of heaven.

Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse ... and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven....

Malachi 3:10

An Offering Is a Gift

The relationship you create with God through your offering is much different. Your offering is a gift you give to God as an expression of your love for Him. A gift doesn't come by command from the receiver, but it comes from the heart of the giver.

Your offering should always be a

statement of your love and gratitude to your God. Your tithe, on the other hand, is always a statement of your strict obedience and trustworthiness.

The Key and the Seed

Let's look at another difference between the tithe and the offering. Your tithe is a key, while your offering is a seed.

Your tithe is a key because it opens the windows of heaven for you.

Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse ... and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven_____

Malachi 3:10

Let me illustrate this principle. Like most businesses, our ministry office closes at a certain time. Sometimes it is necessary for members of my staff to enter the office after business hours. In order to access the building, they need a key. That key will allow them entrance to the office.

The same principle is true in the spiritual

realm. If you need something from heaven, you must have a key to access God's abundant supply. When you pay your tithe, it functions as a key that opens the windows of heaven to you. It allows you to receive the blessings of God that come through those open windows.

Just as you cannot open a locked door without a key, you can't reap a harvest without sowing some seed.

**Be not deceived; God is not mocked:
for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall
he also reap.**

Galatians 6:7

Every Sunday morning, people all over the world faithfully pay their tithes. Yet some of those same people never receive the financial blessings that Scripture promises. Why are they failing to receive? You will find the answer in the following scriptures.

**Will a man rob God? Yet ye have
robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we
robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.**

**Bring ye all the tithes into the
storehouse, that there may be meat in**

mine house, and prove me now herewith,
saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open
you the windows of heaven, and pour you
out a blessing, that *there shall not be room
enough to receive it.*

Malachi 3:8,10

It is important to note that in the King James translation of the Bible, seven of the last ten words of verse 10 are in italics. "...
that *there shall not be room enough to receive it.*" The italicized words were not in the original language. The translators added them to help clarify the meaning of the verse. However, I want you to read it without the added words.

**Bring ye all the tithes into the
storehouse, that there may be meat in
mine house, and prove me now herewith,
saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open
you the windows of heaven, and pour you
out a blessing, that ... not ... enough.**

Malachi 3:10

Many people believe tithing will open the windows of heaven and cause them to have more than enough. However, if you read Malachi 3:10 without the italicized

words, you will see something totally different. Tithing will indeed open the windows of heaven, but **"... that not enough."** Just opening the windows isn't enough. Something is missing.

To understand what the missing ingredient is, let's look at Malachi 3:8 again.

Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

Malachi 3:8

Please notice, the prophet Malachi points out that two robberies were taking place. The people were robbing God of tithes *and* offerings.

The Bible says the tithe opens the windows of heaven, but your offering determines the measure God uses to pour back to you through those open windows.

Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete [do your giving] withal it shall be measured to you again.

Luke 6:38

Notice the word *measure*. This word speaks of an amount or quantity. Therefore, we can clearly see that we determine the measure or amount of our receiving according the measure or amount of our giving.

There are many precious saints who tithe faithfully without realizing the importance of giving an offering. They have opened the windows of heaven. However, they have failed to create a flow through those windows by failing to give an offering.

I know it may come as a shock to you, but the truth is that tithing is not really giving to God. Tithing is simply returning to God what already belongs to Him. Look at it in the Scripture.

And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD'S: it is holy unto the LORD.

Leviticus 27:30

When you pay your tithe, you are

returning what already belongs to God.

Let me give you an illustration of this principle. Suppose a friend of yours asks to borrow your car. You give him the keys, and he agrees to return your car in one week. After one week, your friend comes over and says, "I have been thinking. I want to do something nice for you, so I am going to give you this car." Then he gives you the keys to your own car.

You will probably think your friend needs some psychiatric help, because he is not giving you anything. He is simply returning what belongs to you. In the same way, when you tithe, you are returning what belongs to your Heavenly Father.

And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD'S: it is holy unto the LORD.

Leviticus 27:30

Please notice, God declares that *all* the tithe is His. No part of the tithe belongs to you.

Since the tithe does not belong to you in the first place, you can't give any part of it to God. Neither can you plant the tithe as a seed and expect a financial harvest.

The purpose of the tithe is to open the windows of heaven over your life. Your offering determines the blessing that will flow to you through those windows.

Offerings and Seed

The Apostle Paul said when we give money to God's work, our gift becomes more than a non-living material such as silver or gold. God actually turns it into a living seed.

But remember this—if you give little you will get little. A farmer who plants just a few seeds will get only a small crop, but if he plants much, he will reap much.

Every one must make up his own mind as to how much he should give. Don't force anyone to give more than he really wants to, for cheerful givers are the ones God prizes.

2 Corinthians 9:6,7 TLB

God multiplies your money in the same way He multiplies the farmer's seed. The amount of seed (money) you plant determines the size of the harvest you will produce.

Just as a farmer produces a harvest when he plants his agricultural seed, you will experience a harvest when you plant your money seed.

Giving Brings Forth Multiplication

Tradition teaches that it's wrong to give finances to God expecting to receive finances back from God. However, God's Word is clear on this subject.

God is able to make it up to you by giving you everything you need and more, so that there will not only be enough for your own needs, but plenty left over to give joyfully to others.

2 Corinthians 9:8, TLB

Notice this verse is not teaching that if you give a certain amount of money, you will receive back the same amount you gave.

It speaks of giving an amount of money and *receiving back more money* than you gave. It says you will receive "... **everything you need and more....**"

If you sow a hundred dollars into the gospel, you will reap many hundreds of dollars back in a money harvest.

God's Responsibility to Make Up What You Give

Pay attention to this next statement, for you are about to see an important truth. When you give finances to God, He personally takes the responsibility of making them up to you!

God is able to make it up to you....

2 Corinthians 9:8, TLB

That fact in itself is wonderful, but there is more. God always replaces the amount you give, plus a liberal increase! He gives you back not only enough to meet your own need, but abundantly more than you need.

God is able to make it up to you by

giving you everything you need and more, so that there will not only be enough for your own needs, but plenty left over to give joyfully to others.

2 Corinthians 9:8, TLB

The greatest benefit of sowing money seeds into the Kingdom of God is that each time you give, you position yourself for another harvest. There is no limit to the number of times you can repeat the process. With each planting of seed, the Word promises **"... everything you need and more, so that [the reason for the surplus] there will not only be enough for your own needs, but plenty left over [not to hoard and stack up, but] to give joyfully to others"** (2 Corinthians 9:8, TLB)

Your Tithe

If you are going to receive the God-kind of prosperity in your life, you must not overlook the basics. Paying the tithe is the first step you must take to experience God's financial blessings in your life.

As we have clearly seen from the

Scripture, the word *tithe* means ten percent. It is a specified percentage of your income that does not fluctuate.

The tithe is like a key because it opens the windows of heaven, making it possible for the blessing of God to flow into your life.

The tithe also establishes a trust relationship between you and your Heavenly Father. Through tithing, you can literally prove your faithfulness and dedication to God and His Word.

Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing....

Malachi 3:10

Your Offering

The simplest definition of an offering is anything you give over the tithe. It is a gift to your Heavenly Father, and you are to give it with a cheerful heart.

God also considers your offering a seed. As a seed, it has the potential to produce an abundant harvest.

It is important to remember that the amount of your offering establishes the measure by which God will bless you and increase your substance.

Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete [or do your giving] withal it shall be measured to you again.

Luke 6:38

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