

Tithes and Offerings

“What does the Bible really SAY?”

by Claude P. Scheiner, Jr.

Few topics or sermons are as likely to trigger a host of responses, rebuttals, arguments and psychological defense mechanisms as the subject of money. As human beings it is a given that we usually feel a little cautious and concerned when others attempt to tell us what we should do with our money. Therein lies part of the problem. Perhaps we should answer the question, “Whose money is it, anyway?”

The following study is designed to assist the thoughtful and reflective reader of Scripture to investigate what the Word of God has to say about the subject of giving. This is not an exhaustive study on money or wealth. It is not specifically an exhortation with an agenda in mind. Rather, it is designed as an interactive guide to help you understand the Word of God and to know how to separate it from the teachings and traditions of men that may be in conflict.

A matter of perspective:

We often hear preachers and teachers telling us that the Bible commands us to “tithe” to the congregation. Where do they get this command from? Nowhere in the so-called “New Testament” is there a command to “tithe”. That is not to say that giving is not commanded. It is commanded in the Tanach, what Christians call the “Old Testament”. It is interesting that the vast majority of evangelical Christians today who reject the applicability and authority of the Torah as God’s teaching for His redeemed community will lift this one concept of tithing out and include it in their “statement of faith”. This is hardly being consistent with the Word of God. The other problems with how “tithes and offerings” are represented to believers will become apparent as we examine what the Scriptures actually say. Please put your emotions on the shelf and be submissive to the absolute authority of the Word of God. It is His source of gracious instruction to His redeemed community.

Here is the challenge:

1. Pray that the Holy Spirit will open your eyes to the Word of God and reveal His truth to you
2. Open your Bible
3. Read the verses
4. Write your responses
5. Consider the conclusions

What is a tithe?

Genesis 14:18-20

Malki-Tzedek king of Shalem brought out bread and wine. He was cohen of El 'Elyon [God Most High], so he blessed him with these words: "Blessed be Avram by El' Elyon, maker of heaven of earth and blessed be El 'Elyon, who handed your enemies over to you." Avram gave him a tenth of everything.

The Hebrew word for “tithe” is ma’aser from the root asar and means “a tenth” or “a grouping of ten”. This is the first mention of the tithe in Scripture.

Questions:

1. What was the percentage that Abraham used in giving to Malki-Tzedek?

2. What is the basic definition of a “tithe”?

The First Tithe

Leviticus 27:30-33

30 "All the tenth given from the land, whether from planted seed or fruit from trees, belongs to ADONAI; it is holy to ADONAI. 31 If someone wants to redeem any of his tenth, he must add to it one- fifth. 32" All the tenth from the herd or the flock, whatever passes under the shepherd's crook, the tenth one will be holy to ADONAI. 33 The owner is not to inquire whether the animal is good or bad, and he cannot exchange it; if he does exchange it, both it and the one he substituted for it will be holy; it cannot be redeemed. "

Questions:

1. According to these verses, what is the source of where the tithe comes from?

2. Is there any indication that money is being tithed?

3. To whom does this tithe belong?

Numbers 18:21-24

21 "To the descendants of Levi I have given the entire tenth of the produce collected in Isra'el. It is their inheritance in payment for the service they render in the tent of meeting. 22 From now on, the people of Isra'el are not to approach the tent of meeting, so that they will not bear the consequences of their sin and die. 23 Only the L'vi'im are to perform the

service in the tent of meeting, and they will be responsible for whatever they do wrong. This is to be a permanent regulation through all your generations. They are to have no inheritance among the people of Isra'el, 24 because I have given to the L'vi'im as their inheritance the tenths of the produce which the people of Isra'el set aside as a gift for ADONAI. This is why I have said to them that they are to have no inheritance among the people of Isra'el."

Questions:

1. Who is the designated recipient of this first tithe given to Adonai?

2. According to these verses, what is the source of where the tithe comes from?

3. Is there any indication that money is being tithed?

4. What is the reason for this tithe being given to these recipients?

5. Was this a temporary or a permanent regulation?

6. Some would consider that this tithe can be appropriated by modern day "pastors, ministers or congregations". How would you respond according to what these Scriptures explicitly state concerning the specific identity of the recipients?

The Second Tithe

Deuteronomy 14:22-27

22 "Every year you must take one tenth of everything your seed produces in the field, 23 and eat it in the presence of ADONAI your God. In the place where he chooses to have his name live you will eat the tenth of your grain, new wine and olive oil, and the firstborn of your cattle and sheep, so that you will learn to fear ADONAI your God always. 24 But if the distance is too great for you, so that you are unable to transport it, because the place where ADONAI chooses to put his name is too far away from you; then, when ADONAI your God prospers you, 25 you are to convert it into money, take the money with you, go to the place which ADONAI your God will choose, 26 and exchange the money for anything you want- cattle, sheep, wine, other intoxicating liquor, or anything you please- and you are to eat there in the presence of ADONAI your God, and enjoy yourselves, you and your household. 27" But don't neglect the Levi staying with you, because he has no share or inheritance like yours.

Questions:

1. According to verse 22, how often was this tithe taken?

2. According to these verses, what is the source of where the tithe comes from?

3. Is there any indication that money is being tithed?

4. According to verse 23, where was this first tithe to be taken?

5. Could this tithe be taken just anywhere?

6. What was to be done with the tithe?

7. How is this different than the first tithe?

8. According to verse 27, who else was to share in this tithe?

Deuteronomy 12:4-7

"But you are not to treat ADONAI your God this way. 5 Rather, you are to come to the place where ADONAI your God will put his name. He will choose it from all your tribes; and you will seek out that place, which is where he will live, and go there. 6 You will bring there your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tenths [that you set aside for ADONAI], the offerings that you give, the offerings you have vowed, your voluntary offerings, and the firstborn of your cattle and sheep. 7 There you will eat in the presence of ADONAI your God; and you will rejoice over everything you set out to do, you and your households, in which ADONAI your God has blessed you.

Questions:

1. Where was the tithe to be brought?

2. Could the tithe be brought just anywhere?

3. According to verse 7 what was to be done with the tithe and offering?

4. What do you think was the purpose of such an occasion?

The Third Tithe

Deuteronomy 14:28-29

28 At the end of every three years you are to take all the tenths of your produce from that year and store it in your towns. 29 Then the Levi, because he has no share or inheritance like yours, along with the foreigner, the orphan and the widow living in your towns, will come, eat and be satisfied- so that ADONAI your God will bless you in everything your hands produce.

Questions:

1. According to verse 28, how often was this tithe taken?

2. According to these verses, what is the source of where the tithe comes from?

3. Is there any indication that money is being tithed?

4. Where was this tithe to be brought?

5. Is there anything in these Scriptures that indicate this tithe was to be given in support of the tabernacle?

6. What was the intended purpose of this tithe?

7. Who were to be the recipients of these tithes?

8. What is the anticipated outcome of obedience to these commands?

Deuteronomy 26:12-15

12 "After you have separated a tenth of the crops yielded in the third year, the year of separating a tenth, and have given it to the Levi, the foreigner, the orphan and the widow, so that they can have enough food to satisfy them while staying with you; 13 you are to say, in the presence of ADONAI your God, 'I have rid my house of the things set aside for God and given them to the Levi, the foreigner, the orphan and the widow, in keeping with every one of the mitzvot you gave me. I haven't disobeyed any of your mitzvot or forgotten them. 14 I haven't eaten any of this food when mourning, I haven't put any of it aside when unclean, nor have I given any of it for the dead. I have listened to what ADONAI my God has said, and I have done everything you ordered me to do. 15 Look out from your holy dwelling- place, from heaven; and bless your people Isra'el and the land you gave us, as you swore to our ancestors, a land flowing with milk and honey.'

Questions:

1. According to verse 12, how often was this tithe taken?

2. According to these verses, what is the source of where the tithe comes from?

3. Is there any indication that money is being tithed?

4. According to verse 12, where was this giving to take place?

5. What was the intended purpose of this tithe?

6. Who were to be the recipients of these tithes?

7. What is the anticipated outcome of obedience to these commands?

A favorite Scripture that is frequently appealed to in modern congregational prayers for “the tithes and offerings” and especially during “pledge drives” or “building projects” is the following:

Malachi 3:10

Bring the whole tenth into the storehouse, so that there will be food in my house, and put me to the test, " says ADONAI- Tzva'ot. " See if I won't open for you the floodgates of heaven and pour out for you a blessing far beyond your needs.

Questions:

1. What is the “storehouse” mentioned here?

2. Was the storehouse some kind of local “congregation”?

3. Where was this “storehouse” located?

4. How often was the third tithe taken?

5. What was it that was brought into this storehouse?

6. Is there any indication that money is being tithed?

7. Where was to be done with this tithe?

8. What was the intended purpose of this tithe?

9. Who were to be the recipients of these tithes?

10. What is the anticipated outcome of obedience to these commands?

11. Based upon the previously cited Scriptures, why would it be wrong to assert that this text refers to an annual tithe?

12. Why would it be wrong to assert that money was that which was stored in the storehouses?

13. Also, why would it be wrong to claim that the modern “congregation” is the storehouse referred to in all the passages describing the third tithe?

What is an offering?

Exodus 25:1-8

1 ADONAI said to Moshe, 2 "Tell the people of Isra'el to take up a collection for me-accept a contribution from anyone who wholeheartedly wants to give. 3 The contribution you are to take from them is to consist of gold, silver and bronze; 4 blue, purple and scarlet yarn; fine linen, goat's hair, 5 tanned ram skins and fine leather; acacia- wood; 6 oil for the light, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense; 7 onyx stones and other stones to be set, for the ritual vest and breastplate. 8" They are to make me a sanctuary, so that I may live among them.

Questions:

1. Adonai ordered Moshe to take up a collection from the children of Israel to build the tabernacle. According to verse 2 what was the standard to measure the appropriate amount of “giving”?

2. Was the word “tithe” used in connection with this collection?

3. Did everyone give the same amount? Why or why not?

4. Does anything indicate that there was a limit on how much one could give?

5. Is it possible that some gave more than 10%, a “tithe”?

6. What was the stated purpose of all this giving?

7. What does this mean for us as we seek to understand the heart attitude that God is seeking among givers?

Exodus 35:4-35

4 Moshe said to the whole community of the people of Isra'el, "Here is what ADONAI has ordered: 5 'Take up a collection for ADONAI from among yourselves- anyone whose heart makes him willing is to bring the offering for ADONAI: gold, silver and bronze; 6 blue, purple and scarlet yarn; fine linen, goat's hair, 7 tanned ram skins and fine leather; acacia- wood; 8 oil for the light, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense; 9 onyx stones and stones to be set, for the ritual vest and the breastplate. 10 ""Then let all the craftsmen among you come and make everything ADONAI has ordered: 11 the tabernacle with its tent, covering, fasteners, planks, crossbars, posts and sockets; 12 the ark with its poles, ark- cover and the curtain to screen it; 13 the table with its poles, all its utensils and the showbread; 14 the menorah for the light, with its utensils and lamps, and the oil for the light; 15 the incense altar with its poles; the anointing oil; the fragrant incense; the screen for the entranceway at the entrance to the tabernacle; 16 the altar for burnt offerings, with its poles and all its utensils; the basin with its base; 17 the tapestries for the courtyard, with their posts and sockets; the screen for the gateway of the courtyard; 18 the tent pegs for the tabernacle; the tent pegs for the courtyard, with their ropes; 19 the garments for officiating, for serving in the Holy Place; and the holy garments for Aharon the cohen and the garments for his sons, so that they can serve in the office of cohen." 20 Then the whole community of the people of Isra'el withdrew from Moshe's presence; 21 and they came, everyone whose heart stirred him and everyone whose spirit made him willing, and brought ADONAI 's offering for the work on the tent of meeting, for the service in it and for the holy garments. 22 Both men and women came, as many as had willing hearts; they brought nose- rings, earrings, signet- rings, belts, all kinds of gold jewelry- everyone bringing an offering of gold to ADONAI. 23 Everyone who had blue, purple or scarlet yarn; fine linen; tanned ram skins or fine leather brought them. 24 Everyone contributing silver or bronze brought his offering for ADONAI, and everyone who had acacia- wood suitable for any of the work brought it. 25 All the women who were skilled at spinning got to work and brought what they had spun, the blue, purple and scarlet yarn and the fine linen. 26 Likewise the women whose heart stirred them to use their skill spun the goat's hair. 27 The leaders brought the onyx stones and the stones to be set, for the ritual vest and the breastplate; 28 the spices; and the oil for the light, for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense. 29 Thus every man and woman of the people of Isra'el whose heart impelled him to contribute to any of the work ADONAI had ordered through Moshe brought it to ADONAI as a voluntary offering. iii) 30 Moshe said to the people of Isra'el, "See, ADONAI has singled out B'tzal'el the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Y'hudah. 31 He has filled him with the Spirit of God- with wisdom, understanding and knowledge concerning every kind of artisanry. 32 He is a master of design in gold, silver, bronze, 33 cutting precious stones to be set, woodcarving and every other craft. 34 [ADONAI] has also given him and Oholi'av the son of Achisamakh, of the tribe of Dan, the ability to teach others. 35 He has filled them with the skill needed for every kind of work, whether done by an artisan, a designer, an embroiderer using blue, purple and scarlet yarn, and fine linen, or a weaver- they have the skill for every kind of work and design.

Questions:

8. Adonai ordered Moshe to take up a collection from the children of Israel to build the tabernacle. According to verses 5, 21, 22, 26 and 29 what was the standard to measure the appropriate amount of “giving”?

9. Was the word “tithe” used in connection with this collection?

10. Did everyone give the same amount? Why or why not?

11. Does anything indicate that there was a limit on how much one could give?

12. Is it possible that some gave more than 10%, a “tithe”?

13. Did everyone have the same “talent” to commit to the building project?

14. What does this mean for us as we seek to understand the heart attitude that God is seeking among givers?

Exodus 36:1-7

1 "B'tzal'el and Oholi'av, along with all the craftsmen whom ADONAI has endowed with the wisdom and skill necessary to carry out the work needed for the sanctuary, are to do exactly according to everything ADONAI has ordered." 2 Moshe summoned B'tzal'el, Oholi'av and every craftsman to whom ADONAI had given wisdom, everyone whose heart stirred him, to come and take part in the work. 3 They received from Moshe all the offering which the people of Isra'el had brought for the work of building the sanctuary. But they still kept bringing voluntary offerings every morning, 4 until all the craftsmen doing the work for the sanctuary left the work they were involved with 5 to tell Moshe, "The people are bringing far more than is needed to do the work ADONAI has ordered done." 6 So Moshe gave an order which was proclaimed throughout the camp: "Neither men nor women are to make any further efforts for the sanctuary offering." In this way, the people were restrained from making additional contributions. 7 For what they had already was not only sufficient for doing all the work, but too much!

Questions:

1. What do you make of the fact that God has equipped different people with different gifts and skills in order to get the job done?

2. What was the selection criteria of who participated according to verse 2?

3. According to verses 3-7, what do we learn about the heart attitude of those giving from the “problem” that was created that Moshe had to address?

4. How would you describe the attitude of those who were giving? Do you get a sense of “compulsion” or “legalism” here?

1 Chronicles 29:1-10

1 To the whole community, David the king said, "Shlomo my son is the only one God has chosen. But he is still young and inexperienced, whereas the work to be done is great; because the palace is not for anyone human, but for ADONAI, God. 2 Now I have used all my strength to prepare for the house of my God the gold needed for the articles of gold, the silver for the articles of silver, the bronze for the articles of bronze, the iron for the articles of iron, the wood for the articles of wood, onyx stones, gemstones to be set, brilliant stones of various colors, all kinds of precious stones, as well as marble in abundance. 3 In addition, because my desire is set on the house of my God, since I have my own supply of gold and silver, I herewith give it to the house of my God- over and above everything I have prepared for the holy house- 4 ninety- nine tons of gold from the gold of Ofir and 231 tons of refined silver to be used for overlaying the walls of the houses. 5 The gold is for whatever is to be made of gold, and the silver is for whatever is to be made of silver; and they may be used for anything to be made by craftsmen. Therefore, who offers willingly to consecrate himself today to ADONAI?" 6 Then the clan leaders, the leaders of the tribes of Isra'el, the captains of thousands and of hundreds, along with the supervisors over the king's work offered willingly. 7 They gave for the service of the house of God 165 tons of gold, 330 tons of silver, 594 tons of bronze and 3,300 tons of iron. 8 Those who had precious stones gave them to the storehouse of the house of ADONAI, supervised by Yechi'el the Gershuni. 9 The people were filled with joy, because they had given willingly- wholeheartedly they had given willingly to ADONAI; and David the king too was completely filled with joy, 10 as he blessed ADONAI before the entire community: "Blessed be you, ADONAI, the God of Isra'el our father, forever and ever.

Questions:

1. According to verse 2, how much effort did David exert in the building of the Temple?

2. According to verse 3, what was the desire of David's heart set upon?

3. In that same verse, what level of giving do we see David offering?

4. Do you get a sense of “compulsion” or “legalism” in this sort of giving?

5. In the end of verse 5, David asks a question. Describe what you think was the spirit in which this was given:

6. How does verse 6 describe the heart attitude of those who gave and what the result was to the whole community?

Proverbs 11:24-25

24 Some give freely and still get richer, while others are stingy but grow still poorer.

25 The person who blesses others will prosper; he who satisfies others will be satisfied himself.

Questions:

1. This advice runs counter to the worldly wisdom that would encourage stinginess and hoarding. What is the outcome for those who keep a tight hold on their wealth?

2. What is the outcome for those who consistently bless others?

Proverbs 14:21

21 He who despises his fellow sins, but he who shows compassion to the humble is happy.

Questions:

1. What does this teach us about what our attitude should be towards those less fortunate?

2. What is the blessing to us as we are compassionate?

Proverbs 19:17

17 He who is kind to the poor is lending to ADONAI; and he will repay him for his good deed.

Questions:

1. When we give to those in need, to whom are we really blessing?

2. What is the outcome to us in response to our kindness towards others?

Proverbs 22:9

9 He who is generous is blessed, because he shares his food with the poor.

Questions:

1. How are those who are generous described?

2. What is the action that describes such generosity?

Matthew 6:1-4

1 "Be careful not to parade your acts of tzedakah in front of people in order to be seen by them! If you do, you have no reward from your Father in heaven. 2 So, when you do tzedakah, don't announce it with trumpets to win people's praise, like the hypocrites in the synagogues and on the streets. Yes! I tell you, they have their reward already! 3 But you, when you do tzedakah, don't even let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. 4 Then your tzedakah will be in secret; and your Father, who sees what you do in secret, will reward you.

Questions:

1. What is the consequence of a prideful display of one's giving?

2. What is the reward they do receive?

3. What is the consequence of "secret" giving without public display?

4. What is the reward they receive?

I Corinthians 9:8-18

8 What I am saying is not based merely on human authority, because the Torah says the same thing- 9 for in the Torah of Moshe it is written, "You are not to put a muzzle on an ox when it is treading out the grain." If God is concerned about cattle, 10 all the more does he say this for our sakes. Yes, it was written for us, meaning that he who plows and he who threshes should work expecting to get a share of the crop. 11 If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? 12 If others are sharing in this right to be supported by you, don't we have a greater claim to it? But we don't make use of this right. Rather, we put up with all kinds of things so as not to impede in any way the Good News about the Messiah. 13 Don't you know that those who work in the Temple get their food from the Temple, and those who serve at the altar get a share of the sacrifices offered there? 14 In the same way, the Lord directed that those who proclaim the Good News should get their living from the Good News. 15 But I have not made use of any of these rights. Nor am I writing now to secure them for myself, for I would rather die than be deprived of my ground for boasting! 16 For I can't boast merely because I proclaim the Good News- this I do from inner compulsion: woe is me if I don't proclaim the Good News! 17 For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if I do it unwillingly, I still do it, simply because I've been entrusted with a job. 18 So then, what is my reward? Just this: that in proclaiming the Good News I can make it available free of charge, without making use of the rights to which it entitles me.

Questions:

1. If God is concerned about the provision for cattle, how much more do you think He is concerned about provision for His servants who minister the gospel? Do believers have a responsibility to provide for the needs of their leaders and teachers? How do we provide for this?
2. Paul refers to God's provision for the Levites through the tithe. Verse 14 suggests that this provision for ministers of the gospel is "in the same way" as the Levitical tithe but not identical. Since the first tithe was for Levites only and Paul was from the tribe of Benjamin, Paul must be referring to this "right" of provision to be other than the tithe, such as the free-will offerings. Following Paul's example, should leaders and teachers legalistically make demands on those they lead and teach?

1 Corinthians 16:1-4

1 Now, in regard to the collection being made for God's people: you are to do the same as I directed the congregations in Galatia to do. 2 Every week, on Motza'ei- Shabbat, each of you should set some money aside, according to his resources, and save it up; so that when I come I won't have to do fundraising. 3 And when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the people you have approved, and I will send them to carry your gift to Yerushalayim. 4 If it seems appropriate that I go too, they will go along with me.

Questions:

1. Paul's counsel regarding collections provides consistency without compulsion. How often does he suggest believers set aside their gifts?

2. Motza'ei-Shabbat refers to the ending of the Shabbat at sundown. What does this mean for congregations who insist on taking an offering during the Shabbat?

3. Is there any indication that the believers were "tithing" or was this an "offering"?

4. According to verse 2, what is the standard to determine the level of giving?

2 Corinthians 8:1-15

1 Now, brothers, we must tell you about the grace God has given the congregations in Macedonia. 2 Despite severe trials, and even though they are desperately poor, their joy has overflowed in a wealth of generosity. 3 I tell you they have not merely given according to their means, but of their own free will they have given beyond their means. 4 They begged and pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service for God's people. 5 Also, they didn't do this in the way we had expected, but first they gave themselves to the Lord, which means, by God's will, to us.

6 All this has led us to urge Titus to bring this same gracious gift to completion among you, since he has already made a beginning of it. 7 Just as you excel in everything- in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in diligence of every kind, and in your love for us- see that you excel in this gift too. 8 I am not issuing an order; rather, I am testing the genuineness of your love against the diligence of others. 9 For you know how generous our Lord Yeshua the Messiah was- for your sakes he impoverished himself, even though he was rich, so that he might make you rich by means of his poverty. 10 As I say, in regard to this matter I am only giving an opinion. A year ago you were not only the first to take action but the first to want to do so. Now it would be to your advantage 11 to finish what you started, so that your eagerness in wanting to commence the project may be matched by your eagerness to complete it, as you contribute from what you have. 12 For if the eagerness to give is there, the acceptability of the gift will be measured by what you have, not by what you don't have. 13 It is not that relief for others should cause trouble for you, but that there should be a kind of reciprocity: 14 at present your abundance can help those in need; so that when you are in need, their abundance can help you- thus there is reciprocity. 15 It is as the Tanakh says, "He who gathered much had nothing extra, and he who gathered little had nothing lacking."

Questions:

1. The poor believers in Greece had chosen to donate an offering to the poor in Jerusalem. In providing direct relief to those in need, how does this relate to the concept of the “third tithe” mentioned in the Torah?

2. According to verse 8, was the need shared as a legalistic demand or was it based upon grace?

3. According to verse 11, what was the standard that determined the amount of giving?

4. According to verse 15, what is the end result of everyone participating in giving?

2 Corinthians 9:1-15

1 There is really no need for me to write you about this offering for God's people- 2 I know how eager you are, and I boast about you to the Macedonians. I tell them, "Achaia has been ready since last year," and it was your zeal that stirred up most of them. 3 But now I am sending the brothers so that our boast about you in this regard will not prove hollow, so that you will be ready, as I said you would be. 4 For if some Macedonians were to come with me and find you unprepared, we would be humiliated at having been so confident- to say nothing of how you would feel. 5 So I thought it necessary to urge these brothers to go on to you ahead of me and prepare your promised gift in plenty of time; this way it will be ready when I come and will be a genuine gift, not something extracted by pressure. 6 Here's the point: he who plants sparingly also harvests sparingly. 7 Each should give according to what he has decided in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 Moreover, God has the power to provide you with every gracious gift in abundance, so that always in every way you will have all you need yourselves and be able to provide abundantly for every good cause- 9 as the Tanakh says, "He gave generously to the poor; his tzedakah lasts forever." 10 He who provides both seed for the planter and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed and increase the harvest of your tzedakah. 11 You will be enriched in every way, so that you can be generous in everything. And through us your generosity will cause people to thank God, 12 because rendering this holy service not only provides for the needs of God's people, but it also overflows in the many thanks people will be giving to God. 13 In offering this service you prove to these people that you glorify God by actually doing what your acknowledgement of the Good News of the Messiah requires, namely, sharing generously with them and with everyone. 14 And in their prayers for you they will feel a strong affection for you because of how gracious God has been to you. 15 Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

Questions:

1. According to verse 5, a “genuine” gift is not extracted by pressure. What constitutes a “genuine” gift?

2. How does this appeal by Paul contrast to modern guilt-inducing and arm-twisting manipulations to “give to get”?

3. If believers were giving with a grudging attitude out of compulsion or legalism would their gift still be considered “genuine”?

4. According to verse 7, what is the standard to determine how much one should give?

5. According to verse 7, what is the right heart attitude of the giver?

6. Verse 8 gives us a clue as to one of the reasons God chooses to bless us with provisions. What is it?

7. According to verses 11 and 12, what is the ultimate benefit of all this giving?

Luke 18:18-27

18 One of the leaders asked him, "Good rabbi, what should I do to obtain eternal life?" 19 Yeshua said to him, "Why are you calling me good? No one is good but God! 20 You know the mitzvot- 'Don't commit adultery, don't murder, don't steal, don't give false testimony, honor your father and mother,...'" 21 He replied, "I have kept all these since I was a boy." 22 On hearing this Yeshua said to him, "There is one thing you still lack. Sell whatever you have, distribute the proceeds to the poor, and you will have riches in heaven. Then come, follow me!" 23 But when the man heard this, he became very sad, because he was very rich.

24 Yeshua looked at him and said, "How hard it is for people with wealth to enter the Kingdom of God! 25 It's easier for a camel to pass through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God!" 26 Those who heard this asked, "Then who can be saved?" 27 He said, "What is impossible humanly is possible with God."

Questions:

1. Was Yeshua teaching that all believers should sell everything they have and give it all to the poor?

2. Why do you suppose that Yeshua's words made this man "very sad" ?

3. Is it possible that Yeshua was giving a specific targeted prescription to this one individual who obviously had issues with money?

4. Do you think the rich man's value and appreciation of money was different than Yeshua's?

5. Who do you think have more "money problems", poor people or rich people?

6. What is it about wealth that can become a snare for people?

1 Timothy 6:17-19

17 As for those who do have riches in this present world, charge them not to be proud and not to let their hopes rest on the uncertainties of riches but to rest their hopes on God, who richly provides us with all things for our enjoyment. 18 Charge them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, to be generous and ready to share. 19 In this way they will treasure up for themselves a good foundation for the future, so that they may lay hold of the real life.

Questions:

1. Paul's counsel to those who are blessed with riches include an admonition to not be proud or to let their hope rest on such wealth. Why could having riches be a trap for genuine humility and trust for the believer?

2. Could trusting in one's wealth be a form of idolatry?

3. What should be the actions of those who are so blessed?

4. If those blessed with riches are generous, what is the anticipated outcome for them?

1 John 3:16-18

16 The way that we have come to know love is through his having laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers! 17 If someone has worldly possessions and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how can he be loving God? 18 Children, let us love not with words and talk, but with actions and in reality!

Questions:

1. When we consider the incomparable and matchless gift that Yeshua gave on our behalf, what does this mean as we contemplate our level of giving to others?

2. If we are to “lay down our lives for our brothers”, how much more should we be willing to share our worldly goods to help those in real need?

3. If we are aware of someone’s need and close our heart to responding, what does this say about our claim to love God?

4. What does verse 18 mean?

James 1:27

27 The religious observance that God the Father considers pure and faultless is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being contaminated by the world.

Questions:

1. In providing direct relief to those in need, how does this relate to the concept of the “third tithe” mentioned in the Torah?

2. How does God view this type of giving?

James 2:14-19

14 What good is it, my brothers, if someone claims to have faith but has no actions to prove it? Is such "faith" able to save him? 15 Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food, 16 and someone says to him, "Shalom! Keep warm and eat hearty!" without giving him what he needs, what good does it do? 17 Thus, faith by itself, unaccompanied by actions, is dead. 18 But someone will say that you have faith and I have actions. Show me this faith of yours without the actions, and I will show you my faith by my actions! 19 You believe that "God is one"? Good for you! The demons believe it too- the thought makes them shudder with fear!

Questions:

1. In providing direct relief to those in need, how does this relate to the “third tithe” mentioned in the Torah?

2. Do we have a responsibility to our brother or sister? What is it?

3. What does it mean to have faith that does not validate itself by outward actions?

4. Which is harder, “saying” or “doing”?

5. What is more important, creeds or deeds?

Some warnings:

We have all been exposed to some serious errors on the topic of giving.

We don't “give to get”. That is the wrong motivation. It is a significant twisting of the giving principles fueled by base greed.

We don't give mechanically “out of duty”, although we do have a duty to our brothers and sisters.

God's work is dependent on your giving? Really? What about the sovereignty and omnipotence of God?

Remember the following:

Luke 11:42

42 "But woe to you P'rushim! You pay your tithes of mint and rue and every garden herb, but you ignore justice and the love of God. You have an obligation to do these things- but without disregarding the others!

Questions:

1. What did Yeshua think of those who legalistically give but neglect the justice and love of God?

2. Did He say they had an obligation to justice and love?

3. Did that mean to neglect giving?

Conclusions:

1. If the first tithe was food explicitly for the Levite in the service of the Tabernacle/Temple and had to be presented there, what does that mean for its applicability today when there are no Levites serving in the temple?

2. If the second tithe was food to be consumed by the offerer and his family at the temple, what does this mean for its applicability today when there is no temple?

3. If the third tithe (taken every third year) was food to be given to the poor in our neighborhoods, how can we accomplish this today?

4. In your examination of the Scriptures that describe the three tithes, do you see any evidence that we are to tithe money?

5. When you examine all the Scriptures describing “collections” or “offerings”, do you see a pattern of giving money, time, talent and resources?

6. In terms of “offerings” and “collections”, do you see any limits on what we can give?

7. Based upon all the Scriptures you have read, can you create a unifying set of principles regarding what should determine our level of giving and what our heart attitude should be?

A closing exercise:

Pray that the Holy Spirit will enlighten you to areas of resistance to giving, areas of legalism in giving and, especially to areas of pride in giving. Make a plan to set aside that which God has blessed you with and be diligent in giving out of a cheerful heart.

Always remember that the ultimate “payoff” of our consistent, faithful giving is to the glory of God! May He be praised for His matchless giving of His dear Son as the ultimate gift! If God has given so much to us, how much more should we be ready and eager to give to Him! Praise the Lord!

