

— OUTLINE —

- I. A lot of people are confused about where they should give their tithes and offerings, or how the money they give should be used.
 - A. Scripture says, “**Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse**” (Mal. 3:10).
 - B. In the Old Testament, the tithe went directly to the ministers—that was how God supported the ministers who were doing His work.
 - C. Most pastors teach that the storehouse is your local church and that parachurch and other social-welfare ministries are meant to be supported by offerings above the tithe.
 - D. In a perfect world, I’d have to agree with that, but this isn’t a perfect world.
 - E. Technically, a storehouse is where you put your food.
 - F. You could say that a storehouse is where you get fed—so you should be giving your tithe where you get fed, and that may not be your local church.
- II. You should recognize that a good church does more than just teach the Word.
 - A. It fosters community and is an important part of spiritual growth.
 - B. You need the maturity that comes through fellowshiping with other believers.
 - C. A good local church helps you raise your children and gives them a place to meet other Christian kids.
 - D. It offers one-on-one counseling and marriage counseling.
 - E. Your local pastor helps you deal with grief and get through hard times.
 - F. So, if you are in a good local church that is preaching the Word, helping widows and orphans, and doing what a godly church is supposed to do, then you should be tithing at your church—no question about it.
- III. Unfortunately, I don’t believe most churches are teaching about the grace of God and preaching the true Gospel.
 - A. The most common question I get is from people who are looking for a church that is teaching about the love of God and the finished work of Jesus.
 - B. Many people are going to churches they know aren’t good, but they go there out of a sense of obligation or because there are no other options—maybe their whole family goes there, or it’s the one they’ve always gone to, and they don’t want to change where they go.

- C. In fact, many people are going to churches that preach things completely contrary to the Gospel message.
- D. They leave church feeling condemned and beat up—the exact opposite of what a church is supposed to do.
- E. It would be wrong for me to tell you to put your tithes into the local church and not qualify that by saying a *good* local church—one that is meeting the needs of its members.

IV. It matters where you plant your seed.

- A. Some people think that God sees their hearts when they give, and they reap a benefit from their giving regardless of what the church does with their money—but that's not true.
- B. You'd be a very poor farmer with that kind of attitude.
- C. You can't expect the same results from casting your seed on pavement that you would get from planting it in fertile soil.
- D. In addition, every time you give to a church or minister, you are casting a vote in support of how they conduct themselves.
- E. Every time you give money to a church, you are helping support what they do—whether it's good or bad—so it absolutely matters where you give your money.
- F. I'm not saying the church has to be perfect—no church is.
- G. Maybe your church isn't hitting on all cylinders, but they are preaching the Truth and being a light to the community.
- H. In that case, I would recommend giving your tithe there because you need what a local church offers.
- I. It's wrong to put your money into something that you don't agree with and then go get fed by ministries you don't support financially.
- J. That's like eating at McDonald's and going across the street to Wendy's to pay for your meal.
- K. If you aren't being fed at your church, then you shouldn't be tithing there.

V. Giving where you are fed isn't the only guideline for tithing, but I believe it should be the primary one.

- A. Widows and orphans may not minister to you, but it is a godly thing to give and support them.
- B. That falls under what is called benevolence giving.
- C. There is also giving that goes toward missionary work.

- D. So, not all of your giving should go to where you are being fed, but the bulk of it should.
- VI. The local church is the backbone of the body, and it's best for you to be in a good local church where you can give your tithes—but you shouldn't put your tithes into a dead church.
- A. In the first place, if you are in a dead church, then get out!
 - B. Go find yourself a church that is preaching the Gospel, and then give your tithe to that church, and use offerings to support other parts of the body of Christ.
 - C. If, for some reason, you can't find a good local church or get out of the dead one you're in, then, at a minimum, you shouldn't give all of your money there.
- VII. This principle of giving where you are fed is really simple, and it would solve a lot of problems if believers followed it.
- A. The preachers who are lying and manipulating people in order to get their money are not truly feeding the body of Christ.
 - B. They would go out of business if people would just stop giving them money.
 - C. Then only the people who are really feeding Christians would be getting all of the resources, and the believers would have an abundance of finances.
 - D. The good churches wouldn't have to hold car washes and bake sales to raise money.
- VIII. Giving where you are fed makes a difference for you too.
- A. The return on your giving is going to depend to a degree on how fruitful the ground is that you are sowing into.
 - B. If you give to a church or ministry that isn't really accomplishing the Lord's work, then you are going to get marginal returns.
 - C. When you plant your seed in a place that is fruitful and ministering the Word of God, then you are going to receive a better return.
- IX. I actually had a woman come to me one time with a personalized letter that said, *Dear Stella—or whatever her name was—God woke me up at three o'clock this morning and gave me your name and told me to tell you that if you send me a thousand dollars, then all of the people you have been praying for will get saved.*
- A. The letter went on to promise healing, prosperity, and deliverance if she would just send in some money.
 - B. She was a poor woman, and she told me that she could scrape together the thousand dollars, but she wasn't really sure she should give it.
 - C. On the other hand, she felt compelled to because the letter was personalized, and the minister claimed God had woken him at three in the morning with a special message for her.

- D. She said “What should I do?” and I took the letter, tore it up, and explained that the exact same computer-generated letter was probably sent to thousands of people.
 - E. The reason crooks send those kinds of letters is because Christians actually send money in response.
 - F. I hate to say it, but I believe the majority of giving in the body of Christ is in response to begging or some sort of emotional coercion.
 - G. It’s possible that some good could come out of that kind of giving because God can use anything, but those practices are wrong—giving out of desperation because somebody said that God would supply your needs is an ungodly principle.
 - H. In a sense, it’s like trying to buy a miracle.
- X. The book of Acts tells a story about a man named Simon who tried to do that very thing.
- A. Simon had been a magician in Samaria, but he was born again when he heard Philip preach the Gospel.
 - B. Later, Peter and John went down to Samaria and prayed for people to receive the Holy Spirit.
 - C. Simon saw that people were receiving the gift of speaking in tongues when Peter and John laid hands on them.
 - D. Simon also wanted to be able lay hands on people and have them receive the Holy Spirit, so he offered Peter money to give him the same gift.
 - E. On the surface, that seems like a good desire, but Peter responded differently:

Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God... For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.

ACTS 8:20-21 AND 23

 - i. I’m not sure whether being “**in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity**” means that Simon was never really born again or whether his heart was just wrong, but it’s not good either way.
 - F. This shows that your heart is not right if you are trying to buy God’s blessings.
 - G. At the same time, it’s possible to be in the process of believing God for a miracle, and it may be that letting go of some of your money could be a step of faith for you.
 - H. See, it isn’t giving money that makes the miracle happen—it’s stepping out in faith.
- XI. When Jamie and I first moved to Colorado Springs, a man gave our ministry a building and then came to work for us for about six months.

- A. Back then, we used to send out teachings on cassette tape.
 - B. He noticed that for a couple of weeks at a time, we couldn't fill orders for tapes.
 - C. It was because we'd run out of money and had to wait a week or two until we had enough to get in another shipment of blank tapes.
 - D. When he saw what was going on, he asked me why I wasn't telling people how desperate the ministry was for additional finances.
 - E. He told me he had given away twenty-five thousand dollars the previous year, and he always asked God where to send the money before he gave.
 - F. He said I was the first person who came to mind every time he prayed, because our ministry had helped him transform his life, but he didn't give to us, because I never asked.
 - G. Instead he gave to a television minister who was always begging for money and telling people he was going to go off the air if they didn't give!
- XII. I was invited to be a guest on that same minister's network much later, and the head of his ministry showed me a room filled with hundreds of thousands of letters stuffed and sealed in envelopes.
- A. The letters talked about a pending financial crisis if people didn't give.
 - B. They sent out those letters at six-month intervals and had printed them out for two years in advance.
 - C. *They didn't even have a crisis yet—it was all lies and manipulation!*
 - D. The people who are using manipulation are not truly in tune with God.
 - E. I'm not saying they aren't born again, but I'm saying they are carnal.
- XIII. I had a publicity group come to me one time and guarantee that they could raise one million dollars by sending out letters for us.
- A. They started by telling me about the color ink that people respond to, the font we should use, and how to underline certain statements.
 - B. They had the whole business down to a science.
 - C. They also told me how they had raised another client twenty million dollars using the same techniques just a couple of months before.
 - D. I said, "Well, we could sure use twenty million dollars. But what are you going to say? What are you going to do?" They said, "Just leave that up to us." "No," I said, "I need to know what you are going to say."

- E. So, they started telling me how they would put in a picture of children with distended bellies and flies crawling all over them, and they'd say we help support orphanages and things like that.
 - F. I said "But I don't support any orphanages," but they said, "Neither does the guy we raised the twenty million dollars for."
 - G. I told them I wasn't interested in using dishonest practices.
 - H. They argued that once I had the money, I could use it any way I wanted, but I wasn't going to compromise—my integrity is more important to me than getting millions of dollars.
- XIV. It's okay to give when you are touched emotionally sometimes, but don't let that be the driving motivation behind your giving.
- A. Give from your first fruits, and give where you are fed.
 - B. Give to the people who have really affected your life.
 - C. If the body of Christ would start doing that, then the people who are truly ministering the Word of God would have a super abundance, and the crooks would have to repent or get out of ministry.
 - D. Proper giving would also increase the harvest you receive on your giving—because just like a farmer reaps a bigger harvest by planting in fertile soil, your giving achieves better returns when you plant it in a ministry that is doing kingdom work.

DISCIPLESHIP

QUESTIONS

1. Read Malachi 3:10. Where should the tithes be brought?

2. A storehouse is where you get what?

- A. Sleep
- B. Money
- C. Fed
- D. All of the above
- E. None of the above

3. If you are in a good local church that is preaching the Word, helping widows and orphans, and doing what a godly church is supposed to do, what should you do?

4. Why does it matter where you plant (give) your seed (money)?

5. To put your money into something that you don't agree with and then go get fed by ministries you don't support financially is _____ .

6. True or false: Even if you aren't being fed at your church, you should still tithe there.

7. Why shouldn't all of your money go to where you are fed?

8. What should you do if you're in a dead church?

9. What would believers have if they gave where they are fed?

10. When you plant your seed in a place that is fruitful and ministering the Word of God, then you are going to receive what kind of return?

- A. A marginal one
- B. A quick one
- C. An equal one
- D. A surprising one
- E. A better one

11. Why is giving out of desperation because somebody said that God would supply your needs an ungodly principle?

12. Read Acts 8:20-21 and 23. What happened when Simon the magician tried to buy the gift of giving the Spirit to those he laid hands on?

- A. Peter rebuked him
- B. Peter corrected him
- C. Peter took the money but denied him the gift
- D. All of the above
- E. None of the above

13. If you're in the process of believing God for a miracle, how could giving money be the right thing?

14. Ministers who use manipulation to get money are _____.

15. Is it ever okay to give when you are touched emotionally?

16. You should give where you are fed, but you should give from your what?
- A. Abundance
 - B. First fruits
 - C. Own wallet
 - D. Leftovers
 - E. Taxes

—SCRIPTURES—

MALACHI 3:10

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.

ACTS 8:20-21

But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. [21] Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.

ACTS 8:23

For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.