

GRACE OF GIVING

Title: The Grace of Giving

Week: One off message

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WARM UP

- Do you believe in making New Year's resolutions? If so, what are they? If not, why not?
- What is/are your 'dream/s' for 2017?

WORD

*⁸ Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, 'How have we robbed you?' In your tithes and contributions. ⁹ You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you. ¹⁰ Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need. **Malachi 3:8-10 ESV***

Jesus spoke a lot about money, probably because he knew how close money is to the human heart. In Luke 16 he goes so far as to set up a portrait of two 'gods,' the first being money and the second being the true God – and he basically says, "choose one or the other, because it can't be both!" It's not to say that money is unimportant, or even evil, but probably more than anything else, it exposes our true character, our true ambitions, and our deepest motivations. In this lesson, we look at what the Bible has to say about Christian giving, with a particular emphasis on whether or not tithing is a Biblical expectation for (New Testament) believers like us.

1. TITHING IS OLD TESTAMENT LAW

*"It is the Levites who are to do the work at the Tent of Meeting and bear the responsibility for offenses against it... They will receive no inheritance among the Israelites. Instead, I give to the Levites as their inheritance the tithes that the Israelites present as an offering to the LORD." **Numbers 18:23-24***

God instituted tithing in the nation of Israel (the setting aside of a tenth of your crops and animals to the Lord) as a means of providing for the Levites - the tribe God set aside as priests. It was part of the Law given through Moses (The Mosaic Law), and was binding on all the tribes of Israel. Over and above the tithe, there were several offerings to be made – some for specific reasons, and others out of one's own freewill. To tithe under Old Testament Law was not considered as generosity, it was simply giving back to God that which was not yours. Does this truth challenge your perspective on how you approach tithing? How so?

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2. BELIEVERS ARE NOT UNDER THE LAW

For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace. Rom

6:14

Christians (New Testament believers) are not under Law. This simply means that we do not gain acceptance by God (salvation, reconciliation) through observing a moral code or obeying rules. Being under grace is the flip side of that coin – we gain acceptance by God’s grace through faith; by believing in his Son Jesus Christ who he sent to live the perfect life we could not live, and die the death that we deserved in our place. So tithing is not a ‘legal’ expectation for Christians. We don’t tithe out of fear of punishment by God or condemnation by fellow believers! Do you ever feel guilty when you don’t tithe? How does this truth challenge your perspective?

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3. BELIEVERS ARE LED BY THE SPIRIT

Is the Christian under a tithe law? No! Yet this is not the whole story! The Christian has to give to the work of God. His or her giving is more like the tithing of Abraham and Jacob. They gave a tenth of what they had because that was the leading of the Holy Spirit in their lives. They were tithing by the Holy Spirit, not tithing by any legislation. Christians are not under the law; they are under the Holy Spirit. But the Holy Spirit inspires giving!

(Michael Eaton)

In the Old Testament, God demanded 10% and gave Israel 90% to steward. In the New Testament, God poured out his Spirit on his church, and gave us 100% to steward! We are under no obligation to give! God trusts us enough to allow the wonder of his grace and the leading of the Holy Spirit to shape the heart of the believer and produce “cheerful,” joyful and extravagant generosity – as we often see displayed in the narrative of the early church in the book of Acts. 10% is a helpful Biblical *guideline*. It is neither a law that must be obeyed, nor a ‘cap’ or ceiling that must limit our giving. Explain in your own words what, “tithing by the Holy Spirit” means.

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APPLICATION

- How has this teaching impacted you, and what are you going to do about it?
- Is there any sin that you need to repent of when it comes to money and generosity? (E.g. love of money, lack of faith in God's Word, fear of not having enough etc.) Why don't you do that right now.
- Who are you going to share this message with this week?

PRAYER

- Take time to reflect on all that God has blessed you with. Thank him for his generosity towards you
- Ask God to help you to become more like him – to be generous in every way (time, talents, treasures)
- Pray for the people you're engaging on your frontline, that they too may come to know the greatest act of generosity ever – Christ giving up his life for us!