



"Nothing that is God's can be obtained with money."  
—Tertullian

**06-Mar-20**

## **Ditching Tithing? Consider Carefully**

Times are hard. Money is short. Bills need to be paid. Taxes are due. The car needs new brakes. The baby has run out of diapers, and mama needs new shoes.

The self-centered human mind can always come up with "needs," whether they are genuine needs or more like wants. The fact is that this world's economic system both encourages the desire for things and conversely, keeps wages as low as possible, swelling the bottom lines of owners, partners, investors, and shareholders—but not of Joe or Jane Worker. It is no wonder that, in this era of waning self-restraint, many a person's outgo exceeds his or her income.

So, people are frequently looking for ways to trim their expenses to pay for things they want or to find a little extra to reduce their debts to more manageable levels. They cut their credit cards or take out consolidation loans. Some cancel their cable subscriptions or slash their specialty coffee budgets. A few refinance their homes or sell their costly, high-maintenance cars for cheaper models—anything to squeeze a few more dollars from the budget.

And, yes, in tough financial times, Christians will reduce or cut out altogether the money they give to the church. They justify it to themselves, usually with an excuse like, "[God](#) will understand! He wouldn't want me to starve!" Usually, though, the situation is not as dire as destitution. More often, Christians dip into their tithe money because they have gotten themselves into a situation that they, with a bit more [wisdom](#) and prudence, could have avoided. Though we rarely like to admit it, we usually get ourselves in trouble and then compound the error by making further mistakes trying to get out of it.

One of the worst mistakes we can make is the one we often do by default, it seems: We stiff the Giver of All Good Things (see [James 1:17](#)) to spend the "freed-up" money on our pleasures (see [James 4:3](#)). We forget the principle found in [Deuteronomy 8:18](#)—"And you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth"—and instead, we attempt to right our listing finances through our proven-to-be-quite-fallible financial acumen. Do we really want to put ourselves on the wrong side of God just when we need His help the most?

"But," a Christian may complain, "God requires ten percent off the top and another ten percent for the feasts! Losing a fifth of my income is more than I can bear!" Admittedly, tithing makes budgeting and getting by in [this world](#) trying. Tack on taxes, a mortgage, a student loan, and a car payment, and there may not be a whole lot left over. Add in an unexpected expense like having to replace a refrigerator, reshingle a roof, or repair the HVAC system, and we can quickly find ourselves drowning in debt.

God is not uncaring about these difficulties. He *knows* His command to tithe (see [Leviticus 27:30](#), 32; [Numbers 18:21-24](#); [Matthew 23:23](#)) pinches us in the wallet. In fact, that is a primary reason He requires it of us: Tithing is an act of [faith](#) that forces us to make sacrifices to fulfill it. He wants to see if we will trust Him enough to give Him the first and best of our increase and allow Him to make up our lack through blessings. Do we believe, with the apostle Paul, that "God shall supply all [our] need according to His riches in glory by [Jesus Christ](#)" ([Philippians 4:19](#))? Tithing puts our profession of belief to the test.

Another test in God's command to tithe is that it allows Him to see our priorities. We realize most people put old Number One first, and loved ones, friends, neighbors, pets, and God come somewhere down the line, perhaps not in that order. Our money is *our* money, we tell ourselves, and we spend it on things that will satisfy us. Yet, if God is our first [love](#), we will set aside His tithe before paying for anything else because that money is sacrosanct. It is divinely set apart for His use, and frankly, it is not ours in the first place!

Prioritizing tithing, then, also shows that we believe the words of our Savior Jesus Christ: "But seek first the [kingdom of God](#) and His righteousness [the behaviors that are right in God's eyes], and all these things [the necessities of life] shall be added to you." As He says in the previous verse, "For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things" (verse 32), and He is quite willing to supply them. We just need to show Him our continuing devotion and commitment by how we apportion the monetary blessings He has bestowed upon us. He wants to see that He has supplanted old Number One in our lives (compare [Luke 14:26](#)).

The Jews in Malachi's day had a problem with tithing, considering it in much the same way as some do today, and they had either reduced their tithes or eliminated them altogether. God accuses them of robbing Him and puts them under a curse ([Malachi 3:8-9](#))! The same chapter informs us that God does not change ([Malachi 3:6](#)), so today, His judgment and punishment would be the same against any of His people who followed the Jews' example. That is worth considering carefully!

But the final verses of God's complaint against the Jews contain a challenge:

"Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this," says the LORD of hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer [locust] for your sakes, so that he will not destroy the fruit of the ground, nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field," says the LORD of hosts; "and all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a delightful land," says the LORD of hosts. ([Malachi 3:10-12](#))

God challenges His people to put Him to the test on this matter of tithing. He is essentially saying, "You follow the command, and I *will* follow through with superabundant blessings!" Again, the issue comes down to a matter of faith. Do we trust God to do what He says He will do? Is God real enough to us that we will trust our livelihood to His promise? Are we willing to throw our fears and anxieties to the wind and trust God to supply our needs?

Even so, we must temper our expectations. In the next half-hour, God will not rain gold bullion on us, send a bank vault full of cash, or mail us a deed to a fabulous mansion on a tropical island. However, in His time (which often strains a poor mortal's [patience](#) and faith), He will provide benefits both spiritual and tangible to work out our financial problems.

Yes, times are hard. We have debts. We must eat. But God has all that covered if we will just put Him and His way first. If we prioritize the spiritual, God will take care of the physical. In this vein, Paul writes in [II Corinthians 4:16-18](#):

Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light [affliction](#), which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

We must not "rob God" to solve our money problems. Instead, we need to learn to look past our physical hardships and see the eternal lessons and blessings God will provide if we trust Him to see us through them. Then wait for the windows of heaven to open with abundant, unforeseen blessings!

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

---

**From the Archives: Featured Sermon**

### **Why We Tithe (Part 1)**

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

Because everything in the universe belongs to God, including the natural resources from which we get our wealth, we should not regard tithing as a bill we grudgingly pay. As part of His creation, we are not our own, but the purchased property (a slave or steward) of another. God has shown us a pattern of giving and redeeming, desiring that we should emulate that trait deep in our character, functioning the way God functions. Abraham, having the mind of God, tithed as an appropriate response to what he knew God is and does. Jacob, entering a covenant, responded with a tithe. Tithing both precedes and transcends the covenant, having a deep spiritual significance far beyond the letter of the law- learning to give as God gives.

---

## **From the Archives: Featured Article**

### **Tithing: God's Financial System**

by John O. Reid

God has set in place a wonderful system to pay for the promulgation of His truth. John Reid discusses tithing in general, the different tithes and what income is titheable, and answers several common questions on the subject.

---

If you would like to subscribe to the C.G.G. Weekly newsletter, please visit our [Email Subscriptions page](#).

---