

Calvary Protestant Evangelical Free Church

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Are Christians Required to Tithe?

This article was taken from *Christianity Today* and written by D.A. Carson.
Enjoy, Learn, and Grow!

We should be careful not to isolate the tithe from broader demands of generosity and social justice.
By D.A. Carson

The tithe is clearly taught in the Old Testament, but in the New Testament it seems to be downplayed. Are those of us who give 10 percent of our income doing something not required?

- K. Dale Miller, Wilmore, Kentucky

A: A simple yes or no to this question would be horribly misleading.

We know that the law of Moses mandated the tithe (see Leviticus 27:30-33), at least in part to support the ministry of the Levites (Numbers 18:21-24). Like many other laws, however, it was frequently observed in the breach, although the prophets insisted that failure to pay the tithe was nothing less than robbing God (Malachi 3:6-12).

There were also offerings to be paid. Moreover, faithful Israelites were to be generous with their alms, so that the poor of the land were supported.

In practice, the prophets found themselves inveighing against greed and social injustice (e.g., Amos) and against a raw form of capitalism that squeezed out the poor (Isaiah 5:8-10). In other words, even within the Old Testament we should be careful not to isolate the tithe from broader demands of generosity and social justice.

The only passage in the New Testament that explicitly authorizes the tithe does so in a rather

backhanded way: *“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices. ... But you have neglected the more important matters of the law - justice, mercy, and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former”* (Matthew 23:23, NIV).

Jesus’ primary point, of course, is to criticize the scrupulous tithing of even a few herbs grown in the back garden if it is at the expense of fundamental issues of justice, integrity, and mercy. But one might have expected Jesus to say, “You should have practiced the latter, and let the herbs take care of themselves” - or something equally dismissive. Instead, he says, *“You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former.”*

After the Cross and the Resurrection, the New Testament provides no passage with the same explicit conclusion. That raw fact leads to all the usual debates about the nature of the continuity and discontinuity between the old and new covenants.

Does the tithe continue as a divine mandate because it has not been explicitly abrogated? Or is it part of the “old order” that is passing away?

However, we resolve that broad question, all sides agree that some New Testament writers insist that Christians be a giving, generous people (1 Timothy 6:18). So, at very least, we must insist that believers under both covenants are expected to give generously.

(continued on next page)

Some may wonder, is the dispute about nothing more than the amount? Is there something about 10 percent that is entrenched in moral law?

The following two points will help focus the issue.

1. Beware of pride. There is always a great spiritual danger in thinking that if in some area we have satisfied a specific, concrete demand we have done everything that God requires. Ten percent is a lot of money to some folks; to others it's not very much. Isn't that one of the lessons to be learned from Jesus' comments about the widow's mite? To suppose that God demands 10 percent - and nothing more - can itself foster a remarkably independent and idolatrous attitude: "This bit is for God, and the rest is mine by right." Likewise, if you choose to give more than 10 percent, you may become inebriated from the contemplation of your own generosity.

2. Remember why you're giving. A strictly legal perspective on giving soon runs into a plethora of complicated debates. Is this 10 percent of gross income or of net? How does this play out in a country where a progressive income-tax system rises to 90 percent of income? If we choose to tithe from our net income, are we talking 'take-home pay' only,

or does it include what is withheld for medical insurance and retirement benefits?

It would be easy to list such questions for a page or two without ever asking, "How can I manage my affairs so that I can give more?" That is surely a better question than "What's the correct interpretation so that I can do whatever is required and then get on with my life?"

Christians will want to acknowledge with gratitude that they are mere stewards of all that they "possess." Moreover, New Testament ethics turn not so much on legal prescription as on lives joyfully submitted to God.

This is why the most penetrating New Testament passage on giving is 2 Corinthians 8-9. Under severe trial, the Corinthians' "overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity" (8:2). Even so, they first gave themselves to the Lord (8:5).

So, why not aim for 20 percent in your giving? Or 30? Or more, depending on your circumstances (8:12)? *"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ... for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich"* (8:9).

Bible Study Groups

Want to delve more into the Scriptures to further your knowledge in God's Word? There are numerous groups to join for an in-depth look into the Bible.

Sunday School/Bible Study - at 9:45 a.m.

The Adult Sunday School Class is studying how our modern Bible versions translate certain words from the Hebrew and Greek, and how shades of meaning in the original languages can help us to understand a range of biblical passages that reveal God's nature and His relationship with us.

Men's Bible Study - Monday morning, 9:00 a.m., at Charlie Hetzel's home

The men are doing a study on scriptures that stand out and that have a big impact in our lives. The next study will be on the Holy Spirit and how each of us can allow the Holy Spirit into our lives.

Wednesday Night Bible Study & Prayer - 7:00 p.m. at the church

The Wednesday night group is studying from the book of Galations, studying verse by verse with open discussion in a participatory manner. Time is held for sharing and corporate prayer.

Ladies Bible Study - 1st and 3rd Thursdays, 7:30 p.m., in community room at Mary Jo Dapice's home

The ladies share some refreshments while everyone is arriving, and share weekly struggles in each others walk with God and other prayer requests. Praying for one another is an important part of our meetings. However, the main focus is studying the Word of God, to learn more about and from the Lord, and to keep growing spiritually and in our service for the extension of His Kingdom. The ladies also gather for social events like pool-side luncheon, tea party, movie nights, collect items to reach out to people in need, and support church members with various needs.



Join a Bible Study and see what God has in store for you!

TURN CLOCKS BACK

Daylight Saving Time officially ends **SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 3rd**, at 2:00 a.m. Although most clocks are autonomous, some clocks still need to be changed manually and the hands or time moved back one hour. Be sure to make the necessary adjustments Saturday evening, or first thing Sunday morning.



DECEMBER SENIORS LUNCHEON

The seniors had a very good time at the October Seniors Luncheon - weather was nice, food was delicious, and Pastor Charlie gave words of wisdom in that we should humble ourselves before God and look to Him for guidance in our lives.

Pictured right are a group of friends from the Baldwin Senior Center sitting together. They enjoyed one another's company. Some were surprised to see friends as I heard some seniors say, "I didn't know you came to these luncheons!"



Mark your calendars for the next gathering which is scheduled for **Tuesday, December 3rd**. The luncheon starts promptly at 12:00 noon. Look for more details in the November newsletter.

If God Should Go On Strike

How good it is that God above has
never gone on strike

Because he was not treated fair
in things he didn't like.

If only once he'd given up and said,
"That's it, I'm through,

I've had enough of thee on earth,
so this is what I'll do."

"I'll give my orders to the sun,
cut off the heat supply,

And to the moon give no more light
and run the oceans dry.

Then just to make things really tough
and put the pressure on,

Turn off the vital oxygen till
every breath is gone."

You know he would be justified, if
fairness were the game.

For no one has been more abused
or met with more disdain

And yet God carries on,
supplying you and me

With all the favors of his grace,
and everything for free.

Men say they want a better deal,
and so on strike they go.

But what a deal we've given God to
whom all things we owe.

We don't care who we hurt to
gain the things we like.

But what a mess we'd all be in
if God should go on strike.

What A Night!

Calvary's Neighborhood Night in September was a very nice event and everyone really enjoyed themselves. Just a beautiful evening as the weather was perfect; hamburgers and hot dogs cooked on the charcoal grill were tasty; the salads, sides, and dessert were delicious; and the array of performers and speakers were really great. It's such a special evening as we get a chance to spend time together with the church family, friends, and neighbors while enjoying a meal and listening to the speakers and talented performers.

We thank our master BBQ chefs - the Rose men (Ralph Sr., Ralph Jr., and Brett), the many who helped arrange the evening, those who helped set up and clean up, the many great cooks, and especially our performers.



On instrumentals: David Tommasino played hymns on his saxophone, Joe Brendel played the guitar and sang.

The vocalists included Barbara Corcoran, Nicole Alcindor, and Linda Boughton.

Speakers included Pastor Lucchesi, Paul Nembhard, and Nedy Nathan read a poem she composed.

Some of the younger ones and young-at-heart enjoyed activities such as basketball in the gym or 9-square on the church lawn.

Neighborhood Night is a great outreach into our community and a special time for fellowship with each other. Those who attended were greatly blessed by the evening and felt uplifted in spirits. Well done!



PASTOR APPRECIATION MONTH

October has been designated as Pastor Appreciation Month. We know that the job of a pastor is a demanding one with quite a variety of responsibilities: they preach, teach, visit, counsel, lead, consult, communicate, and do so much more. Every pastor relies heavily on God's guidance, strength, and peace as they live their calling.

We can show our support for Pastor Charlie and give him our appreciation, but also we need to regularly pray for him. It can be difficult to know exactly what we should pray for. The following are a few thoughts to pray for.

1. Spiritual Life

Our pastor's spiritual life is important in finding the wisdom, strength, and guidance necessary to lead a church. Pray for his growth as a disciple of Jesus Christ, as the Holy Spirit works through him to serve our congregation and community.

2. Time Management

With all of their responsibilities, pastors need to become masters of their calendars. Pray for our pastors to use time wisely, including blocking out occasions for Sabbath rest, prayer, work, and family.

3. Family

It is important to remember that our pastor is a spouse, a parent, and a child to a parent who has needs. Remember to pray for our pastor's family.

4. Preaching

Delivering a sermon takes hours of study and preparation. Pray for our pastor as he prepares worship services, sacraments, and sermons. May he have the words to communicate what God has placed on his heart.

5. Strength

The work of a pastor requires reserves of spiritual and emotional strength. Ask God to bolster pastor's heart and mind, especially on days when he may feel weak, inadequate, or unqualified.

6. Visiting Ministries

Visiting people in hospital rooms, nursing homes, rehabilitation centers, memory centers, hospice units, and homes is an important part of our pastor's job. Pray for his ability to connect with those who are struggling and to share God's comfort, peace, and hope.

7. Leadership

Pastors shepherd their congregation, lead individuals to Christ, and guide us to be witnesses in our community. Pray for pastor's ability to lead our congregation.

8. Decision-Making

Being a leader includes making difficult decisions. Sometimes that means making a call when the "right answer" is elusive. Other times it is about making an unpopular choice. Pray for God to guide our pastor's decisions.

9. Ministry With The Poor

Pastors are called upon to help those who do not have enough food, rent money, or the ability to pay a utility bill. They also lead their congregations to do the same. Pray that our pastor has the wisdom and resources necessary to help those in need, and that he might represent Jesus well to those who feel forgotten.

10. Communication

We have all sent a note, email, or text that is misunderstood by the recipient. Ministers reach out to so many people, miscommunication is nearly impossible to avoid. Ask God to make pastor's communication clear, and for grace when he is misunderstood.

11. Conflict

Conflicts sometimes arise when people miscommunicate and disagree. Some conflicts are serious, while others are petty. Pray for strength, wisdom, discernment, and patience as he navigates the conflicts that arise.

12. Vision

Pastors help set the vision for their congregations. Pray that our pastor may clearly see where God is leading our church and for opportunities for ministries to grow in those areas.

13. Finances

Money worries can be a big distraction. Pray for financial peace for our pastor, both with the congregation's budget and his family finances.

14. Health

Our pastor's physical health is important. Pray for him to take time to care for his body through rest, exercise, and eating well.

15. Encouragement

Pray for our pastor to be encouraged. Pray that he might know in his heart the difference he makes in the lives of individuals, in our congregation, and in our community.

We can be an answer to prayer when we encourage our pastor. Write a note, text, phone, or email to let him know what a difference he makes in your life. He will surely appreciate it.

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BIRTHDAYS

OCTOBER

4th Samantha (Hetzl)
Schultz
6th Victoria Manuel
10th Barbara Corcoran
13th Vincent Elcock
15th Robert Brown Jr.
17th Stephanie Wong
18th Brett Rose
18th Eden Nembhard
21st Connor Watts
22nd Ellen Heneghan
23rd Barbara Jamison
25th Vickie Mandato
29th Ryan Wandvogel

NOVEMBER

2nd Charlie Hetzel Jr.
3rd Courtney Gross
3rd Lou Kelting
7th Sherry Valentine
8th Bridget Dowling
8th Paul Nembhard
9th Zavier Foster
9th Paula Kulla
12th Kirk Nehring
18th Roy Seymour
19th Shannon & Shelby
Verity
20th Florence Emeigh
20th Nadeline Sandoval-
Vallejos
22nd Barry Senita
27th Nicole Alcindor
28th Joe Waldvogel

**Happy
Birthday!**

ANNIVERSARIES

OCTOBER

2nd Howard & Maryann Brockway
8th Vincent & Rosemary Rotolo
10th Denis & Giselle Sandoval
12th Wes & Becky Carman
16th John & Lisa Conroy
16th Tony & Sarabeth DiCostanzo

NOVEMBER

5th Lou & Ree Kelting
13th Fred & Sherry Valentine
19th Bob & Diane Benedetto

Slow Down

I need to slow down, and I'm asking the Lord to help me do it. I want to move slowly enough to be aware of all the joys He has hidden for me. I want to slow down enough to grow as He wants me to grow. I want to be quiet enough to hear His voice. I need His wisdom to know how to spend my time and how to order my days.