

In God We Trust

The United States of America was founded on the principles of political and religious freedom. In fact, on our currency are the words, "In God we trust." Do we still "Trust God" in everything we do, especially our finances? The wise man Solomon once said,

Proverbs 3:5-6

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

We don't always understand why things happen the way they do, but, when we "Trust in the Lord with all our heart," knowing that He will never leave or forsake you, you can have peace of mind even amidst a troubled world. We have all heard about being a faithful steward to God, and that He asks us to pay a faithful ten percent. The eighth commandment says, "*Thou shalt not steal.*" The principle for this commandment is "*Honesty.*" God calls for His people to be honest in all phases of their lives. One of the areas of being honest with God is in our stewardship. Every Sabbath men and women come to church, yet they are not being honest with God, because they are not paying an honest tithe and offering. So in this study we want to explore the subject of tithe and offerings. **What is God's plan for tithe and for offering's.**

Malachi 3:8

"Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings."

Many are taught that as long as you pay your tithe, which is ten percent, that it covers everything, from pastors salaries to the electric bills. But, from this passage we see that God says we have robbed Him in "Tithes and Offerings." Obviously, He has a plan for both the tithe and offerings.

To make this easy to understand we want to go through four "P's," in regard to tithe.

1. *The Right Portion*
2. *The Right Person*
3. *The Right Purpose*
4. *The Right Place*

Genesis 28:20-22

"And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God: And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee."

Leviticus 27:30, 32

"And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's: it is holy unto the Lord."

"And concerning the tithe of the herd, or of the flock, even of whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the Lord."

In these two passages of Scripture we see the answer to the first two questions. **The right portions is a "Tithe" or ten percent. The right person, or the one it belongs to, is the Lord. We also see that it is holy to the Lord!** There are not a lot of things in the Bible that God says are holy. God is holy, the Sabbath is holy, the

tithe is holy, and His people are suppose to be holy. Since God is holy, anything connected to or belonging to Him is holy!

Then next thing we want to discover is, “**What is the right purpose.**” There are two reasons the Lord gives us for why we should pay a faithful tithe. Lets look at the first one.

Deuteronomy 14:23

“And thou shalt eat before the Lord thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there, the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the Lord thy God always.”

The Hebrew word used here is “*Yare*” (Strong’s # OT:3372) meaning to, “*Revere.*” To revere means to reverence or respect enough to pay homage and obedience. God desires that His people love Him enough to trust Him through obedience. Can He really empower us to be the light of the world if we don’t trust Him with our finances? Or are not willing to be completely obedient? Of course not! In fact the Bible tells us who the Holy Spirit empowers.

Acts 5:32

“And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.”

As we can see, the Holy Spirit is given to those who trust and obey the Lord. Lets now turn our attention to the second reason that God asks His people to pay a faithful tithe.

Numbers 18:6, 8, 21-26

*v.6 “And I, behold, I have taken your brethren the Levites from among the children of Israel: to you **they are given as a gift for the Lord, to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation.**”*

v. 8 “And the Lord spake unto Aaron, Behold, I also have given thee the charge of mine heave offerings of all the hallowed things of the children of Israel; unto thee have I given them by reason of the anointing, and to thy sons, by an ordinance for ever.”

*v. 21-26 “And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation. Neither must the children of Israel henceforth come nigh the tabernacle of the congregation, lest they bear sin, and die. **But the Levites shall do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they shall bear their iniquity: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations, that among the children of Israel they have no inheritance. But the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer as an heave offering unto the Lord, I have given to the Levites to inherit: therefore I have said unto them, Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Thus **speak unto the Levites, and say unto them, When ye take of the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then ye shall offer up an heave offering of it for the Lord, even a tenth part of the tithe.**”***

So far we have seen that:

1. The Right Portion is **Ten Percent** (10 %).
2. The Right Person, to give it to, is **the Lord**.
3. The Right Purpose is two-fold;
 - a. That we may learn to “**Fear**” or respect God enough to be obedient to Him.

b. For the support of Gospel Ministry.

God has provided a way for His people to have someone to minister to them full time. Can you imagine what it would be like for a minister to have to work full time in order to support his family and then do ministry on the side. I once knew a minister that had this very dilemma. He had a family, so he had to work full time to support them. He also had a small church, of which he was the pastor. One day he told me, *“It is hard when a member of the church dies and I am at work. I don’t find out until I get home, and then I try to go and minister to them. I then have to see if I can get the time off of work so I can do the funeral.”* He then said to me, *“I wish I could minister full time, but the congregation isn’t large enough to support a full time minister.”* As you can see from the Scriptures, this was never God’s plan! He provided a way for the ministry to be full time for all His people.

Now let’s look at the fourth “P” that pertains to tithe, taking it to the right place.

Nehemiah 10:37-38

“And that we should bring the firstfruits of our dough, and our offerings, and the fruit of all manner of trees, of wine and of oil, unto the priests, to the chambers of the house of our God; and the tithes of our ground unto the Levites, that the same Levites might have the tithes in all the cities of our tillage. And the priest the son of Aaron shall be with the Levites, when the Levites take tithes: and the Levites shall bring up the tithe of the tithes unto the house of our God, to the chambers, into the treasure house.”

Deuteronomy 12:5-6, 11, 13-14

v. 5-6 *“But unto the place which the Lord your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come: And thither ye shall bring your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and heave offerings of your hand, and your vows, and your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and of your flocks:”*

v. 11 *“Then there shall be a place which the Lord your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there; thither shall ye bring all that I command you; your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the heave offering of your hand, and all your choice vows which ye vow unto the Lord:”*

v. 13-14 *“Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest: But in the place which the Lord shall choose in one of thy tribes, there thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings, and there thou shalt do all that I command thee.”*

These passages of Scripture make it clear that the Lord is the One who chooses the place, not you. Now, where is the place that He “Causes His name to dwell there?” **It’s the church!** The Lord tells us in Exodus 25:8, **“And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them.”** The Lord tells us to bring our tithes and offerings to the church. Therefore, He does not give us the option to give it to any good cause we desire. If we do that, the Bible says we are **“Robbing God!”**

So we have discovered the four “P’s” of Tithing are:

1. The Right Portion is **Ten Percent (10 %)**.
2. The Right Person, to give it to, is **the Lord**.
3. The Right Purpose is two-fold;
 - a. That we may learn to **“Fear” or respect God enough to be obedient to Him.**
 - b. **For the support of Gospel Ministry.**
4. The Right Place to bring it is **the Church**.

Your next question might be, “Does tithing stay at the local church?” This is a very good question! Remember the great commission that Jesus gave the church was to take the Gospel to the world.

Matthew 24:14

“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.”

Revelation 14:6

“And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,”

The question I would have to ask, “Is any church large enough, in itself, to take the Gospel to the whole world?” The answer of course is No! In order for the Gospel to be taken to the entire world there would have to be a structured organization with a plan. Just like Jesus had laid out for His people in the Old Testament. The tithes and offerings came into the central storehouse (the temple at Jerusalem) and was then distributed to the Levites that lived and ministered in different areas of the promised land. This provided a way for full time ministry to be available to God’s people all day, every day.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has followed God’s pattern of tithing and an organizational structure that is taking the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the entire world.

Notice the structure of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

1. General Conference (*Oversees the world church*)
2. 13 Divisions (*Oversees the Local Unions*)
3. Local Union Conference (*Oversees several Conferences*)
4. Local Conference (*Oversees the Local Churches in their Conference*)
5. Local Church (*Oversees the Local Outreach in their area*)

The Seventh-day Adventist Church literally circles the globe. 2015 statistics show membership beyond 19.1 million worshipping in more than 151,461 congregations in 215 countries. (Note that the United Nations recognizes 237 countries in the world!) The Adventist Church also operates 175 hospitals, 385 clinics and dispensaries, medical centers, nursing homes, retirement centers, orphanages and children's homes, that in the year 2013 served almost 16 million people. In addition the Church runs a world-wide system of more than 7,792 schools with over 1,864,352 students from kindergarten to graduate professional schools. In response to Christ's invitation to feed the hungry and clothe the naked, Seventh-day Adventist’s try to help friends and neighbors in need irrespective of race, color or religion. Internationally, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) helps victims of war, famine, floods, earthquakes, and other disasters. In addition, many Adventist congregations have community service facilities, from which volunteers help those in need close to home. In the year 2000, Adventist’s helped over 14 million men, women and children. The Adventist Church also has a world-wide publishing ministry, with more than 62 publishing companies, printing scores of magazines and other publications in nearly 379 languages and dialects.

With this organizational structure, the tithe comes in to the **local church**, and all of it is passed on to the central storehouse-**Michigan Conference Office**. They keep approximately seventy percent (70 %) to hire Pastors, Evangelists, Bible Teachers, and pay for administrative staff at the conference office. They then pass on ten percent (10 %) to the **Local Union Conference**. It is important to note that this is NOT a labor union. This union is a simply union of several conferences. The Michigan Conference in part of the Lake Union Conference. The Lake Union Conference oversees the Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Lake Region Conferences.

The Union Conferences make sure the support is in place to keep the churches eyes on God’s mission. The local

conference sends the rest of the tithe, twenty percent (20 %) on to **the General Conference**. They oversee the world field, hiring Pastors, Evangelists, and Bible Teachers for other countries in the world. This means that for every dollar of tithe that you give your local Seventh-day Adventist church, you are truly supporting a world-wide ministry. Taking the Gospel of the Three Angels' Message to the world!

Another point worthy of noting is that in the Seventh-day Adventist Church all ordained ministers are paid the same, whether they serve in a large church or in several smaller ones. That is one of the benefits of the tithe coming to a local storehouse-it gets distributed equally!

The next question that I am frequently asked is, "What do I tithe on, my gross or my net?" This is a very good question. Notice what the Bible says.

Deuteronomy 14:22

"Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year."

The first thing the Bible teaches us is that we are to tithe on our increase. Our increase is anything you could put in the bank. If you get cash or a check, for a birthday gift, of \$25.00, then you should pay both ten percent (10 %) tithe, which would be \$2.50, and an offering to the local church. In our next passage it tells us what that increase is.

Nehemiah 10:37

"And that we should bring the firstfruits of our dough, and our offerings, and the fruit of all manner of trees, of wine and of oil, unto the priests, to the chambers of the house of our God; and the tithes of our ground unto the Levites, that the same Levites might have the tithes in all the cities of our tillage."

The "First-fruits" would be your gross income. After all, what does Uncle Sam tax you on, your gross or you net income? We all know it is our gross! God's says I should be first! Now, your work may take taxes out automatically, and that is okey. We still can make sure God gets His right portion based on our gross income.

Now that we have covered the tithe, what about offerings! God had said in Malachi 3:8 that we had robbed Him in "Tithes and offerings." If not one penny of tithe stays at the local church, what pays for the doors to be open, and the utility bills, such as the electric, gas, and phone. Do we like heat in the winter and air conditioning in the summer? Where does the money come from to purchase kitchen and cleaning supplies? How about outreach and evangelism, where does that money come from? As you can see your offerings to the local church budget help keep the local lighthouse going, so it can be a light to that corner of the world! There are other offerings that are important such as the Advanced Programs and World Budget. That is why God tells to prove Him! This is one of the few times that God says to test Him! He normally says to trust Him, **but this is a faith issue and one thing that you can be sure of, you can NEVER OUT GIVE GOD!**

Malachi 3:8-10

*"Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? **In tithes and offerings.** Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. 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.**"*

At one time in our life, Nancy and I owned a business and didn't feel like we could afford to pay tithe or offerings. When they would call for the tithes and offerings I would quick pull out my wallet to see if I had a

buck or two, I might even give a five dollar bill, if I was feeling generous that day. Then one days, the pastor of our church came over to visit us. As we were sitting around the dining room table talking the conversation turned to the church and the activities of the church. He told me that he would like to see me in a leadership position, but that he currently couldn't. I asked why not? He proceeded to tell me that it was because I wasn't paying tithe and offerings. I explained to him that we really didn't have a lot of money and didn't feel we had the extra to pay tithes and offerings, so we would just put in a little money when the offering plate was past.

Thank God for faithful ministers! He pointed me to the Bible, pointing out that tithe was NOT optional or if we had enough left, but rather was ten percent (10 %) and was to be given first! He said, "I am sure things are tight, but I can only point you to God's command, *"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse,"* and to His promise to see, *"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."*

He gave us some wise council that day, and that was to, **"Prove" God.** Test Him to see if His word is true. We thanked him for the visit and he left. Nancy and I talked about the visit we had just had with the pastor, about our finances, and our lack of faith. Right then we decided to put God to the test, to *"Prove"* Him, and see if His promise was true! We got on our knees and asked God to forgive us for robbing Him, and to help us to be faithful, for we were putting His promise to the test!

We began to pay a faithful tithe and offerings. I must admit the first few times were a real leap of faith, for at least once we put our LAST dollars in the offering plate. But as always, GOD IS FAITHFUL! He truly did open the windows of heaven and pour out blessing that we did not have room enough to receive! Our business increased, which meant so did our finances. But we found out that the blessings weren't always in the form of money! Safety on the roads, good health, clothes and shoes not wearing out, cars lasting 300,000 miles, were just some of the blessings that God gave us.

Now our testimony is that, WE CAN'T AFFORD "NOT" TO BE "FAITHFUL" IN TITHES AND OFFERINGS! Would you like to make a covenant with God to be faithful in your tithes and offerings? After all we don't want to rob God! STEP OUT AND BECOME FAITHFUL. GOD LOVES A CHEERFUL GIVER!